NYASALAND POLICE
JUST
THE JOB
SOME EXPERIENCES OF A COLONIAL POLICEMAN
PALESTINE POLICE
by
GEOFFREY J.
MORTON

The author in Nyasaland, 1953.

About this re-release

Just the Job is a memoir written by my father, Geoffrey Morton, first published in 1957. It recounts his life as a British Colonial Police officer, including the 1942 killing of Abraham Stern, leader of the Zionist underground group Lehi.

Long out of print, and shaped by the assumptions of its time, this re-release is not a celebration of empire but a legacy project. In revisiting it, I hope to contribute to the historical record—and invite reflection on the enduring impact of colonial entanglements.

— Geoffrey Morton Jnr.

JUST THE JOB

Some Experiences of a Colonial Policeman

by

GEOFFREY J. MORTON

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To

ALICE

my wife,
whose never-failing love and personal courage
created and maintained in me the determination to
keep alive in the face of long odds.

Foreward

This book is not, and does not pretend to be, a history of the Colonial Police Service, nor of the work of the police forces in the countries in which I served.

It is simply a record of some of my own experiences from the time I joined the Palestine Police in 1930 until I retired in 1953 from the Nyasaland Police.

Inevitably, therefore, the personal pronoun figures prominently in the narrative and, generally speaking, other people's lives (and deaths) are mentioned only in so far as they were tied up with my story. I wish it could be otherwise, for there are many thrilling episodes of courage and fortitude and devotion to duty by Colonial policemen waiting to be told.

This, then, is my own personal story; a story of learning the hard way—from the bottom up; of pleasant and highly unpleasant tasks performed in the course of duty; of murder and violence and sudden death; of brave men and cowards; of many mistakes and some successes; of a wife who was a tower of strength, and of many good comrades of differing races and colours and creeds whose common denominator was, above all else, a love of police work.

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Prologue
AMATEUR POLICEMAN

It was a constable in the Metropolitan Police, stationed at Kennington Lane Police Station in south-east London, who first aroused my interest in police work and made me aware that there was more to it than knowing the right time, seeing children safely across the road, controlling traffic and being able to direct anybody to anywhere.

He was well over six feet in height, this constable of mine, of massive build, and with hands and face weathered brick-red from many years' exposure to the elements.

For me (and, indeed, for a good many other people, as I later had opportunity to observe) he embodied the whole might and majesty of the law. He was the epitome of quiet self-confidence and it never occurred to him, I am sure, that there might be any danger in his chosen profession or that any member of the public would ever think of lifting a hand in anger against him.

The year was 1926, and I was eighteen. In May the General Strike broke out, and overnight the whole machinery of the country was brought to an abrupt halt. Motivated mainly, I suppose, by an adolescent desire to be of help to the community, I volunteered for the Metropolitan Special Constabulary and quickly found myself enrolled as a very green —and possibly, the youngest—special constable.

I was duly sworn in, handed a warrant card, a whistle, an armlet and a baton and issued out to my large constable with instructions to proceed (policemen never just "go"—they always "proceed") with him to the Elephant and Castle, the major road junction in South London, to carry out a routine beat duty.

I am over six feet myself, and at that time was a reasonably

energetic front-row forward, but the look of amused tolerance he bestowed on me left me in no doubt whatever as to his estimate of my usefulness to him in the improbable event of his needing any assistance. However, he gave me a friendly nod and the merest suggestion of a wink and said: “Keep alongside me, mate, and you’ll be all right!” Little knowing that the truth of this comforting assurance was shortly to be demonstrated in a most convincing manner, I buckled on my armlet, put my whistle and warrant card in my pocket, tucked my baton (for want of a better place) into the waistband of my civilian trousers and set off with my new friend on this, my very first, tour of police duty.

Nobody who has not personally had that experience can imagine just what it feels like to venture forth for the first time into the harsh light of the public gaze, branded by the blue-and-white armlet as an amateur policeman—an amateur, moreover, without enough service even to have acquired a uniform. There can be few ordeals more calculated to give anybody an inferiority complex. A recruit to the regular force must feel pretty self-conscious by any standards on his first few appearances in public in uniform; how would he feel, I wonder, if he had to do those duties dressed in his own clothes apart from just one item of uniform—say, his helmet?

Everyone seemed to look me up and down as we passed, and I felt that they turned to watch our progress up the road. Why did they smile at me in that cynical way? Had they so easily penetrated what I hoped was my air of studied insouciance?

By the time we were nearing our destination my ego was about as flat as a postage stamp, but these depressing thoughts were soon driven from my mind by the sound ahead of us of many excited and angry voices, punctuated by what appeared to be the crash of breaking glass. Soon we could see a large crowd of men—several thousand of them—centred round a stationary tramcar, to which they had clearly conceived a marked antipathy.

All professional transport workers were on strike, so that the

presence of the tram meant that it must be manned by volunteers—or blacklegs, as the strikers would have called them. Whoever they were, it was certain that they must be having a pretty interesting time, with the plate-glass windows of their erstwhile chariot disintegrating all round them. As we looked we saw smoke and flames rise from one end of the vehicle, to be greeted by an ironic cheer from its attackers at this visible evidence of the success of their concerted action.

Outwardly my friend's calm and phlegmatic manner remained unchanged at the sight of this outrageous breach of the King's peace, and it was only when I found myself almost having to trot to keep up with him that I realised his regulation pace had lengthened considerably.

Not unnaturally, perhaps, the burning tram was the focus of attention for all eyes, and there appeared to be no thought for the possible arrival of the police. My companion wasted no time; he did not trouble to draw his baton but, with a verve and determination which should assuredly have earned him his cap for England at Rugger, started to elbow his way through the mob towards the tram, with the strikers giving way right and left beneath the impetus of his progress. Each dig and push was accompanied by suitable advice to the recipient—"Come on, there, get a move on!" "Out of me way, me lad!" "Move along there, you!" and other similar remarks which, innocuous in themselves, were delivered in a tone which made it crystal clear that any hesitation or refusal would incur his immediate and effective displeasure.

Sheepishly I thrust back the baton which I had started to draw from its uneasy resting-place under my ribs and, feeling like the youth in the popular Christmas carol, in my master's steps I trod, safe in the vacuum created by his passage. We made steady progress towards the heart of the mob, and I noted with interest that for the most part the people in our vicinity—probably because they had already expended their supplies of ammunition—were throwing

nothing more damaging than pithy (if abusive) epithets at the tram and its luckless crew.

We came up behind one man, however, who brought his arm back over his shoulder, nearly hitting my policeman on the nose as he did so, and launched a bottle containing a colourless fluid at the tram. As the missile flew from his hand some instinct must have warned him of impending danger for, with a look of horror on his face, he turned his head and saw the huge bulk of the constable towering over him, swollen to even greater proportions by his righteous indignation at what had just occurred. His head ducked down under the protection of his still upraised arm as, with a Cockney whine which carried the urgency of desperation, he cried: “Sorry, guv’nor!” This plea, alas, was immediately answered by a laconic: “Too late, mate!” as my companion’s baton, which had materialised as if by magic, came down smartly on the bottle-thrower’s unprotected left shoulder. In another second he had disappeared behind us, the baton was back in its pocket and we were on our way once more.

We reached the tram without further incident and were there joined by a strong force of police who had come up from another direction; in a short time the rioters were dispersed and law and order was restored.

I have never anywhere witnessed a more effective display of sheer police sense than that given by that ordinary, uniformed, duty constable in dealing with that mob. As it happened, the responsibility of deciding the further action to be taken was removed from his shoulders by the advent of reinforcements, but had they not arrived I am sure that my friend was prepared, as a simple matter of duty, to place himself squarely between the tram crew and the rioters, who would only have got at their intended victims over his dead body. It was fortunate for me, perhaps, that that situation did not arise, for while I had not found the role of page to Good King Wenceslas unduly onerous, I must confess that I

did not fancy myself playing, with any degree of confidence, Spurius Lartius to his Horatius.

* * *

I stayed on in the Special Constabulary after the strike ended and took an active part in both the professional and social activities of the formation to which I was attached.

I attended regularly the weekly drill parades, at which our instructor was a most efficient ex-Sergeant Major of one of the Guards battalions, and for three consecutive years I was a member of the squad which represented our formation at the inter-divisional drill competition. The standard achieved in this competition was very high, but it was not police work; for some reason which I have never been able to understand no arrangements were made whereby we might receive instruction in the more technical aspects of a policeman's duties, nor were we encouraged to seek such knowledge of our own volition.

In 1929, still with little idea of the powers and responsibilities of a policeman or of the criminal law and laws of evidence, I was promoted to the rank of sergeant.

* * *

At that time I was working at a retail distribution depot of a big London dairy company, where I rejoiced in the grandiose title of Servery Manager.

No housewife in those days could possibly manage without two separate deliveries of fresh milk to her doorstep daily (including Sundays), and it was imperative that one of these arrive in good time for breakfast. This meant that the roundsmen had to get their horses harnessed, load their carts and start out on their first round

by 5 a.m. They would be back about seven o'clock, have their breakfast, load up again and be off on their second round, from which they might return at any time up to 5 p.m. On Sundays—if they were lucky— they would finish by one o'clock. Each year everybody got seven whole days' holiday on full pay; also, on one day a year, after months of careful planning and amid great excitement, we all set off in hired coaches (charabancs, we called them then) for our annual outing by the sea. On that day our customers had to make a great personal sacrifice and get along as best they could on only one delivery of milk, which we sent out earlier than usual so that we might get away in good time. We considered this to be well worth while, for after all we could—and always did—sleep in the coach, knowing that we should be quickly awakened for suitable refreshment at every place at which we stopped on the journey. Looking back now on those annual outings, it seems to me that the opportunity they offered to snatch a little extra sleep was perhaps one of their most desirable attractions.

I had long since decided, therefore, that my future lay elsewhere, and I had been looking round for some time for a more satisfactory form of employment. These were bad times, however; the depression had hit the country like a thunderbolt, the unemployed were numbered in millions, and jobs of any kind were at a premium. Regularly I scanned the meagre "Situations Vacant" columns and tried to ignore the far more numerous "Situations Wanted", which were generally either pathetic or desperate in their wording. I was determined that if possible I would get a job abroad somewhere, for I saw no prospect of finding a really interesting post in England.

Then, following closely upon reports of rioting and bloodshed in the Holy Land, I saw one day an advertisement asking for applications for appointment as constables in the Palestine Police. It stated that preference would be given to ex-Service men, but I fulfilled all the other requirements, and I felt that my voluntary service with the Specials would more than compensate for the fact

that I had not been in the Army.

The more I thought about it the more I was convinced that this was the job for me. It had everything, and surely I had quite a lot to offer in return—I was fit and strong, reasonably literate and willing to learn.

Without delay I went to apply in person at the offices of the Crown Agents for the Colonies. After a short wait I was granted an interview at which, having answered a few desultory questions, it was intimated to me quite clearly but very nicely that I was not the stuff of which good policemen are made, and that no useful purpose would be served by permitting me to complete the appropriate application forms.

With heavy heart I went slowly down the broad staircase of the Crown Agents building and out into the dank gloom of the late autumn morning of Millbank. The sombre tones of Big Ben, striking the hour a few hundred yards away on my left, and the dismal honk of a river tug pressing fussily upstream at the head of its small flock of barges only served to accentuate the already acute feeling of depression which now replaced the lively thrill of anticipation I had enjoyed since I first saw the advertisement.

But I was not, as I had imagined, condemned to continue my humdrum existence in a London suburb for the rest of my working life; towards the end of the year new advertisements appeared in the Press for men for the Palestine Police, and this time so much stress was not laid on service with the armed forces.

Profiting from my earlier experience, I did not apply in person, but sent in a carefully worded letter asking for the application forms and making no mention of my previous contretemps. Promptly the forms came back, were completed and despatched; I was called for an interview, which lasted but a few minutes, and sent for a medical examination. I passed it, and I was in!

After giving in my notice and submitting myself to sundry injections, I was ready to go, so on a bitterly cold February morning in 1930, together with twenty-nine other embryo policemen of the widest possible assortment of types, I embarked at Southampton in a one-class boat for Port Said and the Holy Land.

PART ONE

THE HOLY LAND

Chapter 1

JERUSALEM

The British Section of the Palestine Police was created in 1926, when the Palestine Gendarmerie, established four years earlier, was disbanded.

This step was presumably taken in order to provide an impartial unit to maintain law and order on police rather than on military lines. At the time of my arrival in March, 1930, the British Section was a police force in name only, and it played but a token part in the everyday policing of the country.

The thirty young men in my draft remained together as a squad for our month's training course at the Depot at Mount Scopus. Several such drafts had preceded us, and many more were to follow in the months to come. Between us we represented every conceivable stratum of life in the British Isles, from the heir of an impoverished Earl, products of exclusive public schools and graduates of famous universities to professional bruisers, coalminers, regular soldiers and really tough Tyneside Geordies who played a better game of football in their bare feet than they did with boots on.

Our squad was placed under the command of a corporal who had held similar rank and duties in one of the Guards battalions. He was charged with instructing us in the art of foot-drill (in which, by virtue of my training in the Specials, I was already fairly proficient), in arms drill and musketry (of which I knew nothing) and in P.T. At the end of our training we were all pretty efficient soldiers, and

could slope and present arms and perform complicated drill movements with a polish worthy of a crack regiment. In addition we were able to fire our rifles and revolvers with reasonable accuracy and quickly clear any of the many and varied stoppages on that antique but nevertheless effective weapon, the Lewis gun.

There was also a law instructor, whose knowledge was bestowed equally upon all the squads in training at the time. From him we learned—by heart—our powers of arrest and search without a warrant, though we were not told whence we derived those powers. We were also required to memorise a long list of strange-sounding names of birds, together with the dates on which they could, and could not, be shot. I had no occasion to use this hard-earned knowledge, for, as far as I am aware, I never met a francolin or bustard, nor any other of these fabulous creatures, during my fourteen years in the country. There were other more important matters to occupy my attention.

Similarly with dangerous drugs; here again we were required to commit to memory long lists of obscure drugs and their derivatives, many of which never came near the country, but were never shown samples of the notorious hashish and opium in which there was a constant and lucrative smuggling down from Turkey, Syria and the Lebanon through Palestine to Egypt. A slab of hashish worth £i or so in the Lebanon could be sold for anything up to £20 in Egypt, so that for the indolent Arab this was easy money indeed and well worth the risks involved. Many and varied were the methods devised for smuggling the drugs through Palestine without detection, and some years later, when I commanded for a time the Narcotics Bureau and the Flying Squad, I was to get a great deal of satisfaction in pitting my wits, with some small success, against those of the drug-smuggling fraternity.

No facilities existed in the British Police Depot for teaching us Arabic, nor were we encouraged to seek such knowledge for ourselves. Naturally, we all acquired a few picturesque (or so we

thought) Arab curses, which we practised on the camp sanitary boys and various taxi-drivers, but the policeman of any rank who took the trouble to learn even a smattering of everyday conversation in the vernacular was looked upon by the rest of us with scorn only very slightly tinged with respect or envy. (Surely the ability to converse with the general public in their own language is one of the first requisites of any policeman anywhere?)

Obviously, we were at that time intended to be used, not as real policemen, but as tough shock-troops, ready to slap down, quickly and effectively, any recrudescence of the anti-Jewish rioting which had led to the expansion of the British Section from 120 in 1929 to 650 in 1930. No wonder the Crown Agents were more interested in my lack of Army service than in my amateur police experience in the Specials in London!

At the end of my month's training I was posted as a driver to the Transport Branch at Mount Scopus.

I had not wanted to be a driver at all. I wanted to be a policeman, but that seemed to be quite out of the question, and—an important point this—a driver earned 30*s.* per month more than a policeman; this meant that the inadequate rations we received could be augmented every night of the month with a fried-egg sandwich and a cup of tea in Spinney's Canteen. Mr. Spinney was the universal provider to Palestine in general and the police in particular; he held the contract to supply us with rations and he operated all our canteens, wet and dry. At Christmas he gave us each a sausage and a bottle of beer. His was not an easy task. Such was the ration allowance that it was impossible for him to provide good food in sufficient quantity; in consequence, there was much general dissatisfaction about our food, and the brunt of our complaints fell on Spinney.

My first personal encounter with Mr. Spinney was, however, one I shall always remember. About a year after my arrival, I was driving the Jerusalem Police Tennis Team (of which I* was the

newly-elected and very self-conscious captain) to play a match against the Y.M.C.A. In order to do justice to my new responsibilities, I had that morning invested every penny I had in a brand-new super-quality tennis racquet, which was tucked down beside the door of the cab of the truck I was driving. As I passed Spinney's main offices on the corner of Mamillah Road I hit a pothole (no tarmac in those days), the door flew open, out fell my racquet and, alas, before I could pull up the back wheel had passed right over it. As I stood, a moment later, looking at the wreckage a finger tapped me on the shoulder and a cheery voice said, "Here. Take this one!" and there stood Mr. Spinney himself, pressing into my hands the exact duplicate of my broken racquet. He had seen the incident from his office window and had run out, grabbing up a new racquet from his shop in passing. He refused to listen to my protestations, but pushed me into the cab and shooed me off. The next morning I went to see him to arrange how I could pay for it, but he refused point-blank to discuss it and would not hear of payment. Needless to say, from that time onward I had a lot of time for Mr. Spinney, and in later years my wife and I were frequent guests at his delightful home on Mount Carmel.

Early in 1930 the British Section played a major part in an operation which, while it could not by any stretch of the imagination be called police work, was vital to the welfare of the country—the anti-locust campaign in the Sinai Desert. This was, of course, long before the days of D.D.T. and mass spraying from the air, but nevertheless quite effective methods had been devised for dealing with the insects, provided they could be contacted while still "hoppers". At this stage in its development the young locust can cover much ground, devouring everything in its path, but cannot yet fly.

Many miles of sheet tin, about 18 inches high, were laid in the path of the advancing hordes. The insects reached this barricade and, unable to surmount it, turned to the right or left and travelled along it looking for an opening. Eventually they would fall into one

of the shallow pits which had been dug at regular intervals, there to be sprayed with paraffin by one of the operators and burnt.

That must have been a particularly bad year, I think, for it was the only such campaign to take place in Palestine during my stay there. I certainly saw many small swarms of locusts during the next few years, but they bore no comparison with the vast multitudes which were exterminated in the Sinai Desert in 1930. But for the prompt action taken to deal with them on that occasion they would most surely have stripped the whole of Palestine and its northern neighbours of every blade of grass and every green leaf.

To suggest that the British Section did no police duties in Jerusalem at this time would not be entirely accurate. While the vast majority of those stationed there were billeted at Mount Scopus, there were a few outposts consisting of perhaps a corporal and three men located in various Jewish suburbs of the capital, and they did sporadic patrols round their particular area. In addition there were two British constables on night patrol in the German Colony (the City's most select residential suburb), and another—on cinema nights only—on evening duty in Zion Square, the Piccadilly Circus of the New City. It was frequently my duty to convey the two constables detailed for night duty to the German Colony Police Station in my Morris tender and then proceed to the Zion Cinema to collect the man on duty there and convey him back to Scopus. This constable was required to remain on duty until the cinema had finished and the audience had dispersed; this often entailed for me a wait of up to half an hour after delivering the night patrol men to their posts. On one such occasion on returning to Scopus I entered the hut in which the two night-duty men were billeted in order to deliver a book which one of them had inadvertently left in my truck half an hour before. To my amazement, there were the two self-same constables snugly tucked up in bed, having beaten me to it by taxi. I'm sure the elite of the German Colony slept all the better for the knowledge that they were in the safe hands of stalwart British policemen!

During this period I had my first taste of civil disorders and, strangely enough, it was a case of Jew *versus* Jew.

One of the best Jewish football teams was the Hashmonai, and their ground was in a wadi only about half a mile from our camp on Scopus. They played regularly all the best available teams, including British Army and police elevens, and were always able to give a good account of themselves. To conform to the wishes of the majority of teams, all league matches were played on Saturday afternoons, but, where the Hashmonai were concerned, the Orthodox Jews from the nearby Ghettoes of Measheārim took strong exception to this flagrant breach of the Sabbath. They used to turn up in vast numbers to these matches, invade the pitch, seize the ball (if they got the chance) and hurl abuse at the sinners. With their flowing ankle-length robes, pasty, cadaverous faces flanked with long side curls and surmounted by fur caps, they presented a strange picture; nevertheless, they always gave a good account of themselves in the battles of the football ground, eventually making it necessary for Services teams to decline to play against Jewish teams on Saturdays.

Reading matter was always difficult to come by in the police camp, and in consequence any book or periodical, however dilapidated or out of date, was always worth acquiring. One publication which came my way was a two-year-old issue of an American magazine which carried pages of letters from its readers, many of them seeking pen-friends in other parts of the States. Correspondents were invited to write in, but each letter had to be accompanied by 25 cents in stamps. To pass an idle hour one evening another constable and I amused ourselves devising a fatuous letter from “Two Lonely Policemen in the Holy Land”.

As we had no American stamps, and as we did not even know whether the magazine was still in existence, we never expected to hear any more of our literary effort, and promptly forgot the matter. We had no acknowledgment from the magazine, nor did we

even know just what was published, but over six months later the deluge began. Answering a very irate summons to the Depot Office, I was appalled to find there several sacks containing literally thousands of letters from all parts of America and Canada. Most of them were from women —of every age from eight to eighty—and if we had had either the inclination or the facilities to comply with all their requests we should have emptied the River Jordan and have denuded every hill in Judea of its wild flowers as effectively as if the anti-locust campaign had never taken place.

My fellow author and myself attempted conscientiously to open and read our vast mail, but when we found that most of the letters contained anything from ten to thirty pages we realised that the task was beyond us, and we dealt out most of them unopened to our comrades.

Quite a number of them hinted at possible matrimony and dozens made it clear that we had only to give the word and the writers would set foot without delay for Jerusalem in order personally to lift the burden of loneliness from our shoulders.

The totally unexpected result of my first venture into print frightened me in its implications and, in addition to bringing down the wrath of our superiors on our heads, laid us open to a good deal of ribald chaffing from our companions, which took a long time to live down.

Shortly after this incident I was the victim of a practical joke which nearly frightened me out of my life. I had been out on a late night patrol with the officer to whom I was then attached, and returned to the camp well after lights out.

In the circumstances, I was entitled to turn the lights on in the hut while I was preparing for bed, but in order not to disturb the other occupants who were all asleep I undressed in the dark. One of them—I never discovered which—had sewn a large dead bat inside the crutch of my pyjamas, and in my innocence I put them on in the

darkness. When I felt the soft, furry mass against my skin I tore the pyjama trousers to shreds in my terror. Only when I put the lights on did I find out what it was.

On another occasion some wag put some chopped raw vegetables and meat in the radiators of a number of cars in the Depot garage, including the old Morris tourer I was driving at the time. The next morning when I had to drive to Hebron and she boiled—as she always did in hot weather— I was completely at a loss to account for the delicious aroma of Irish stew which completely pervaded the surrounding atmosphere. At the time I decided that it must be coming from the briefcase of the officer I was driving, though I could not for the life of me imagine what it could contain, and I did not venture to ask him. It was only when I got back to camp to learn that other drivers had had a similar experience that the truth was discovered.

* * *

My original contract with the Palestine Government had been for two years' service, followed by two months' leave in England.

When the time came for me to decide whether to re-engage for a further period or to return to England, I found myself hard put to it to decide which course to take. I took the wrong one. Influenced unduly by the inadequate food, poor accommodation and lack of opportunity for real police work, and insufficiently by the implications of an inspection of the Force by Sir Herbert Dowbiggin (Inspector-General of the Ceylon Police and one of the finest policemen the Empire has ever produced) and the appointment on his recommendation of a new Inspector-General for the Palestine Police, I sailed for home in March, 1932.

Six months later I was on my way back again, convinced that my future lay in police work overseas, and fortified in my decision to return by reports I had received from my friends there as to the

sweeping being done by the new broom.By this break I lost for all pension purposes two years' police service, but I was thereby able to go back and receive the full recruit's course of training recently instituted by the new Inspector-General, which was to prove of great value to me throughout my career.

Chapter 2

ON THE BEAT

The Palestine Police to which I returned in November, 1932, determined to make a career in it, was a very different force from that which I had left a few months earlier.

Roy Godfrey Bullen Spicer, the new Inspector-General of Police, was an undersized, round-shouldered, wisp of a man with an incredible vitality out of all proportion to his appearance. Trained in Ceylon under Sir Herbert Dowbiggin and until this appointment Commissioner of Police in Kenya, he was a policeman in the best sense of the word. He knew precisely what he wanted and he wasted no time on preliminaries and frills. He had been sent to Palestine to create a police force, and by his standards a body of men which was unable to play its full part in the prevention, detection and prosecution of crime had no right to be described as such, however smart its appearance.

Within a very short time of his arrival, therefore, many of the officers in the force were rudely jolted out of the easygoing round of social events, interspersed with a little routine work, to which they had long since become accustomed. Each officer's post was quickly reviewed and his duties succinctly defined; these invariably included (for all officers, however senior) a minimum of two night inspections weekly—one before and one after midnight—and the officers concerned were expected to be back on duty by 9 a.m. the next morning. Each officer commanding an executive police formation was required to visit the scene of every serious crime as soon as it was reported and had personally to supervise the working of every police station and post under his command. Some few of the officers, who perhaps considered themselves indispensable,

were injudicious enough to resist the new order of things; they received very short shrift, and in no time at all found their services dispensed with. This prompt action secured the outward, if not the wholehearted, co-operation of the remainder, who quickly buckled down to learn, for the first time in some cases, the rudiments of the job which most of them had held for a number of years.

To me the change was particularly noticeable. Officers who, when I left, appeared to have no more serious function or responsibility than to be around in case of emergency, suddenly developed a purposeful—and worried—air. Lunch which had often lasted a good two hours was disposed of in as little as thirty minutes, and on occasion even consisted of a hurriedly eaten sandwich in the office or at the police station which was being inspected.

Another aspect of life which intrigued me was the intense interest which had sprung up overnight in all sporting events in which a police team was taking part.

Soccer, rugby, hockey, or cricket, one could always see on the touchline or boundary the little figure of “R.G.B.”, his chin buried in his chest, his *kalpak* pushed forward over his eyes and his fists thrust deep in his pockets if we were doing badly; but if we were winning his hands would be clasped behind his back, his chin in the air and on his face an ill-concealed grin of pride at the prowess of his lads, as he was pleased to call us.

I never heard whether the many other officers who, also in uniform, turned up at these matches, did so as a result of a direct order or only because it was thought politic to do so. I do know, however, that this sudden awareness and appreciation of their efforts gave a tremendous fillip to the morale of our players and, as a result, we virtually swept the board in practically every sport in which we entered a team.

This boosting of morale had also an immediate effect on the

rank and file of the unit as a whole, engendering a strong *esprit de corps* and thus conditioning us for the part we had to play in the rebirth of the force.

Previously the investigation of crime and its prosecution had been almost entirely in the hands of the Palestinian members of the force. There were a few Arab and a couple of Jewish commissioned officers and, of course, Inspectors and N.C.Os. of both races, supervised by British senior officers.

British N.C.Os. and constables were, apart from the duties which I have described earlier, mainly retained as a striking force, and were kept aloof from the indigenous members of the force.

Spicer changed all that. The striking force retained for emergency duties was reduced to a minimum, and just as quickly as suitable accommodation could be found for them the remainder of the British police were distributed throughout the country, charged with playing a major part in the prevention and detection of crime and the maintenance of law and order.

British constables who had hitherto considered themselves superior to Palestinian policemen of any rank now found themselves working in close contact with them, and, indeed, frequently under the direct orders of Jewish and Arab N.C.Os.

Police stations in Jerusalem, Haifa, Jaffa and Tel Aviv were allotted sufficient British police to enable those towns to be adequately patrolled throughout the twenty-four hours, seven days a week; the most promising—and the most literate— among the British constables were given intensive training courses in the maintenance of criminal and administrative station records.

My three months' recruits' course at the end of 1932 was undoubtedly of great value to me. The syllabus had been completely overhauled and, although of necessity the use and care of firearms still played an important part, far more emphasis was

given to teaching us the criminal law of the country, the laws of evidence, police procedure and the rudiments of criminal investigation.

There was also now an Arabic instructor attached to the Depot, and, very conscious of my previous shortcomings in this respect, I made the fullest possible use of his services. In January I passed my first language examination in Arabic, and also the Proficiency Pay Examination in law, criminal procedure and general police duties.

At the end of that month I was posted to Measheārim Police Station in the New City of Jerusalem for general police duties.

Although by virtue of my job in England I was well accustomed to early rising and long hours, the daily hours of duty and the extraneous calls upon our so-called off-duty time at my new station came as something of a shock to me. The day was divided into three duty shifts: 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., 2 p.m. to 10 p.m., and (for personnel employed in the station itself) 10 p.m. to 7 a.m.; men on night patrol finished at 6 a.m.

The morning and night patrols were worked without a break, but about forty-five minutes were allowed for men on the 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. shift to get their food—if they were able to do so in that time.

When we came off night patrol at 6 a.m. we had a good mile walk—uphill all the way—to Mount Scopus, where we unfortunates of Measheārim Police Station were accommodated in huts alongside the barrack square.

By the time we had had our breakfast and a wash and were ready for bed the squads in training would have fallen in on the parade ground outside our window and for the rest of the day, with only short breaks, all our hopes of sleep were dissipated by the constant shouting of commands by the instructors.

Two afternoons a week we were required to walk down to the

Police Station to attend lectures and other forms of instruction, and one morning each week we had to dash back from night duty, clean ourselves up quickly and attend the Superintendent's parade for one hour. If we were so misguided as to get mixed up in any cases which required our attendance at court to give evidence, that had to be done in our own time.

On night patrol we worked to a system, introduced by Spicer, which in theory was admirable for affording the maximum of police coverage with a minimum of manpower but which, when planned and operated in an unreasonable manner, could break the heart of any man, however conscientious.

On parading for duty at the appointed time each patrol of two men—generally one British and one Palestinian—was handed a time schedule and a bundle of small numbered boards to each of which a sheet of paper was attached; on each beat in the area were approximately eight sites known to all men in the station at which the appropriately-numbered board had to be deposited at the time first stated against that number on the schedule.

Thereafter we dodged from board to board, signing them at the required times at the whim of the Station Inspector who had devised that particular schedule. We thus played a sort of "Tom Tiddler's Ground" with the many inspecting officers and N.G.Os., who, armed with a copy of the night's schedule, frequently lay in wait at or near one of the points in the hope of catching us arriving late, or not at all.

This system did at least ensure that our beats were covered frequently at a smart pace (sometimes nearly at a jog-trot, when the time allowed was inadequate); it meant also that we had to think twice about keeping observation on anybody we saw loitering or acting suspiciously on our beat for fear we were late in reaching the next board and were accused of neglecting our duty!

This was, of course, the other extreme of the pendulum from the

state of affairs which had existed previously, and it certainly went beyond anything intended by Spicer. It was in fact the somewhat inept effort of N.C.Os. who, never having had a taste of it themselves, were prepared to drive their men beyond all reasonable limits in the hope of attracting the attention of their superiors and thus gaining early promotion. Perhaps, too, they knew of the night patrols who, after booking on duty, went back to bed in the first available taxi!

Things eventually improved considerably, however, and we settled down to build up what was to be one of the most efficient police forces in the Empire, working in conditions of unparalleled difficulty.

I shall always regret that such were the circumstances in which I performed my patrols in Jerusalem that I never had time fully to appreciate the beauty and atmosphere of the city during the long night hours.

But some things I shall never forget—the chiming church clocks; pariah dogs slinking from dustbin to garbage heap in search of food, and streaking with a yelp round the nearest corner if one even spoke to them; the myriad diamond-bright stars in the purple sky or, on moonlit nights, the knife-edge between inky shadow and the brilliant light in which one could read a book with ease; the boy shepherds sleeping amid their flocks at the Damascus Gate, waiting for the morrow's market; the heady aroma of Turkish coffee, and the feel of it scalding one's throat; the Orthodox Jew, prayer-shawl in hand, clutching his long robes tight around his chest to keep out the chill night air, hurrying off to the synagogue or perhaps, if it is Friday night, coming to ask us to switch off his electric light for him (to do this task himself would be a serious breach of the Sabbath, and to leave it burning until the following evening would be an equally serious breach of his sense of thrift —I never discovered whether it was considered that the necessity for keeping the Sabbath holy applied only to the Jews or that every British

policeman was already beyond redemption anyway); the smell of new bread from the many bakeries (in which you could rest awhile and get warm, if you were prepared to take a chance and didn't mind the cockroaches) and of spices, leather and less pleasant things from the Old City; the crowing of countless cocks such as Peter must have heard; and, above all—and this never failed to send a shiver of excitement down my spine—the voice of the muezzin on the minaret at Sheikh Jarrah, calling the faithful to prayer—*"La Allah ilia el-Allah!"* Now, indeed, our night's vigil in the Holy City was drawing to a close.

Our day duties were perhaps less arduous, for they lacked the desperate sense of urgency always present with the night patrols. There were, too, a number of fixed points, such as the Damascus Gate, which was full of interest, and the slaughterhouse at which, on seeing for the first time a beast being slaughtered in accordance with ancient ritual, my whole instinct was to draw my pistol and put the wretched thing out of its misery. Instead, I went quickly round the corner to be sick.

Palestine was no place to be an animal in—unless, of course, you were a camel-tick, a bed-bug, a cockroach or a flea. Every other form of animal life had a thin time indeed.

Ticks were generally accepted to be as much a part of every beast as the skin to which they clung so tenaciously. And there were no African tick-birds here, to perch obligingly on its head and remove these parasites just as soon as they had sucked up enough blood to give them a flavour. Cockroaches also were looked upon as part and parcel of every cupboard, box or drawer in which food or clothing was kept. (Not that cockroaches are peculiar to Palestine—in Africa once I found one 4 inches long in my living-room; I thought it must be something special, so I tied a string around its waist and took it for a walk to see the local entomologist; he was barely interested, saying that it was quite a common wild specimen, which were sometimes larger than the domesticated strains. So

much for my hopes of having a new line in cockroaches named after me!

I fought many losing battles in many parts of the world against cockroaches, but when all the modern insecticides had failed either partially or completely I won my last battle— by using common borax. I found that this, mixed with equal quantities of sugar and placed in crown corks in strategic points in kitchen and pantry, had an irresistible attraction for the beasts and they almost fought to get at it. By the time they got back home the borax solidified in their little bellies, and they died in their holes. No spraying—no mess; the stuff could be left in position indefinitely and the young roaches which hatched out after their parents were dead died themselves after their first meal, thus breaking the breeding cycle which so often defeats the sporadic use of insecticides. This is not only the most effective way of getting rid of these obnoxious insects but has the added merit of being also the cheapest.

Most of my time on day patrol in Jerusalem I spent in causing loads and saddles to be removed from the backs of camels and donkeys and in conveying those which had saddlegalls—and they were many indeed—for treatment to the S.P.C.A. ("a sort of Y.M.C.A. for donkeys," as I once heard an Arab describe it to an interested friend).

We never succeeded, I regret to say, and neither did the magistrates before whom we arraigned them, in arousing any sense of shame in the Arab owners of these poor beasts; they appeared to be completely indifferent to the suffering of their animals and were only interested in whether or not the sores on their backs would affect their load-carrying capacity. There was nothing sadistic about this attitude, let it be said—no infliction of pain for the fun of it, such as one sometimes finds in children or retarded adolescents—- just a sheer inability to grasp the fact that animals had feelings similar to their own. They paid their fines with an air of resignation and tried to conceal their amazement at the Englishman's inane

concern about such trivialities. I firmly believe that the only way to deal with cruelty to animals or children is by the infliction of corporal punishment making the punishment fit the crime, in fact. It was this principle which we British constables frequently adopted when dealing with donkey-boys who used as a goad a sharpened nail stuck in the end of a stick.

I cite two other instances to show that, where animals were concerned, this land was far from holy.

The Christian Easter, the Jewish Passover and the Moslem feast of Nebi Musa all coincide, and are all centred on Jerusalem. Religious fervour ran high at this time of year, all police leave was cancelled, and every available man was on duty or standing by throughout the period that the celebrations were in progress.

In 1933 another British constable and I, each armed with a rifle and fifty rounds of ammunition, were temporarily posted for the duration of the festivities to the Hebrew University of the Mount of Olives. Our task was to defend with our lives the staff and property of the University against attack by any or all of the many thousands of excited Arabs who filled the Old City below us, having converged on Jerusalem from all over the country.

Fortunately for the pair of us, they did not come our way, and we were left to take what steps we thought fit to safeguard the very lovely grounds and buildings around us.

The students were on holiday for the Passover, and only a few members of the faculty and some of the domestic staff were in residence. One morning, while doing a routine check around one of the buildings, I heard a dog whining pitifully in a lower room. Thinking that perhaps the animal had been accidentally locked in at the end of term, I tried the nearest door and, finding it not locked, soon made my way to the room from which the sound came. There I found not one but several dogs each with one or more of its legs in a plaster cast, lying in a mixture of filth and uneaten food on the

bare concrete floor. The smell was indescribable.

After a search I found a member of the faculty and told him of what I had found, leaving him in no doubt as to what I thought about people who treated dogs in that manner: he assured me that they would be cleaned up and given proper attention at once. By the time I got back to the building the door was locked, and I was never again able to gain admittance. I was very green in those days.

I wrote a full report on this matter through my own Station Officer to the Superintendent in charge of Jerusalem, stating the condition in which I had found the dogs and adding that in my opinion this constituted culpable cruelty of a very serious nature. I heard nothing for some weeks and then, out of the blue, I was summoned before a very senior officer in the Medical Department—either the Director or his Deputy, I believe it was. At his request I recounted once more my story, to which he listened very closely. He then gave me a lengthy dissertation on the necessity for using animals in the cause of medical research—which I had not disputed—adding that, by inflicting a minimum of controlled pain on the animal, it was often possible to prevent a lot of human suffering.

I pointed out that the least that could be done, if an animal was to be used for such a purpose, was to ensure that it was given every possible comfort. He fully agreed, he said, with this point, adding that all who had read my report were distressed to think that conditions such as I described could have existed. He assured me that arrangements had now been made to ensure that adequate supervision was given in future. And with that I had to be content.

The other instance occurred near Haifa some years later, when in an Arab village I found a wretchedly thin donkey which had a length of half-inch lamp wick completely encircling its neck. The point of this was that, apart from a couple of inches under the base of the neck, where it emerged from two suppurating holes, the wick was threaded underneath the thick, loose flesh and skin. The pain which must have been caused during and subsequent to this

operation must have been frightful. I shot this donkey to put it out of its misery, and was subsequently mildly chided for my action by an Arab inspector who was with me because, he claimed, this was a common form of treatment for donkeys which were off colour!

No, I should not like to be an animal in the Holy Land. . . .

Chapter 3

ADVENTURE IN CAIRO

In May, 1933, my mother came out to Palestine for a holiday, and while I was touring the Middle East with her I gained two valuable lessons on the use (or should I say misuse?) of two weapons in the Colonial policeman's armoury—ju-jitsu and the automatic pistol.

The first occurred during our visit to Cairo. One afternoon, while my mother was taking a siesta, I went out for a walk with a little parson whom she had met on the boat. As we passed the railway station and approached Shepheard's on our way back to our hotel one of the many dragomen who thronged the area pushed rudely between my companion and myself. I turned to pass a remark to my clerical friend about this unseemly behaviour and found, to my surprise, that he had stopped some paces behind me; there he was, holding both hands over his heart and with a look of astonishment on his face.

I went quickly to him, half expecting to see blood oozing between his fingers, and exclaimed: "Whatever's the matter? What's happened ?"

He removed his hands to reveal the empty breast pocket on his blue blazer and, pointing down the road at the dragoman who had passed between us, declared in a voice vibrant with shock and indignation, "That man took my fountain-pen!"

As he showed no eagerness to do anything to recover his stolen property it occurred to me that he was looking to me to do it for him; with a murmured prayer that he should have indicated the

right man—there were a hundred others just like him in sight—I ran after the suspect, treading as lightly as I could in order not to warn him of my approach; when I was a bare 2 yards from him he glanced furtively over his shoulder, saw me descending on him and, quick as a flash, put his hand into his cummerbund and flicked the missing pen into the gutter.

This action dispelled my doubts as to his guilt and left me with the choice of trying to grab him or the pen. I chose him, and seized him smartly by the left arm. He at once started to struggle, so I quickly changed from a light grip to a comealong hold on the same arm. Now, in theory this hold, properly applied (as mine undoubtedly was), renders the prisoner powerless to resist and enables his captor to march him wherever he likes without difficulty. It all sounds very simple and effective when one tries it out in the gym, but it is a very different kettle of fish when one comes to use it in earnest.

Three things were wrong as far as I was concerned; in the first place, strangely enough, my technically perfect hold did not render my captive powerless—far from it, for he kept swinging blows up at my head with his clenched right fist and, as both my own hands were busy with his left arm, I was unable to shield my face in any way; in the second place, although by applying more pressure than was pleasant to his arm at the appropriate moment, I was able to lessen the force of these blows and force him to walk a few steps on tiptoe, I had not the slightest idea where I wanted him to “come along” to; and, thirdly, if I had known that there was a police station but fifty yards away (which I didn’t), I could not have got him there, for in no time at all we were surrounded by a shoving, shouting gesticulating mob of dragomen who, while they made no immediate concerted effort to rescue their fellow, were pulling and snatching at my coat-tails and sleeves, and screaming gibberish which bore not the slightest resemblance to the Arabic which I had so painstakingly acquired in Jerusalem.

By virtue of my height, I was able to look over the heads of most of them and, in between dodging the blows of my prisoner and applying more and more pressure to his arm, I looked round desperately for any sign of assistance in the shape of an approaching policeman. Not a hope. All I could see, beyond the sea of brown faces and white caps, was the head of my little parson as he jumped up and down every few seconds on the fringe of the crowd for all the world like an excited jack-in-the-box.

While I was still wondering what to do to get myself out of this mess without (if it could possibly be avoided) releasing my prisoner, something happened which made me let go of him as quickly as if he had suddenly become red-hot. With a sound like the snapping of a dry stick his arm broke at the elbow. With a howl of mingled pain and rage and with his arm flapping uselessly at his side, he dived into the crowd and was away in the twinkling of an eye. Their purpose achieved, the mob quickly melted, and there was my reverend friend, fountain-pen waving aloft, gleefully crying, "I've got it! I've got it!"

It was gratifying to know that one, at least, of the leading characters in our little drama was able to derive some satisfaction from the way it ended.

* * *

All too soon my mother's visit came to an end, and I escorted her to Haifa to catch her boat home. Our last night we spent at a hotel near the port entrance, and as I was undressing to go to bed that night I learned my second lesson—this time at somebody else's expense. In the next room to mine was another British constable who, as it happened, had also come to see his mother off on a ship the next day. For his own and his mother's protection he had borrowed from a friend an automatic pistol which he had carried fully loaded in his pocket. Before going to bed he had taken the

pistol out of his pocket to unload it for the night, and had inadvertently pulled the trigger, shooting himself through the thigh; so great was the shock of the explosion that before he knew what he was doing he pulled the trigger again, inflicting a second wound only an inch from the first.

Fortunately for him, he then managed to control his reactions, otherwise he might have continued this involuntary target practice until the gun was empty. By the time I reached him he had dropped the offending weapon on the bed and was staring with a look of horror on his face at the two neat, round holes in his leg.

Luckily, they were both flesh wounds, from which he soon recovered; it seemed to me to be a ridiculous thing to do, but at the same time it brought home to me in no uncertain terms the fact that firearms are things to be treated always with the very greatest respect.

Chapter 4

STORM OVER GALILEE

On top of the long hours of duty coupled with parades and lectures which were my lot at Measheārim Police Station, I was struggling hard with my Arabic with the intention of sitting the Higher Language Examination, which was due to be held in July of that year.

After the departure of my mother I got down to my studies in real earnest, only to find that I was always tired—too tired, in fact, to grasp what I was trying to learn. I suffered a rude awakening—in more senses than one—when, during the course of a night patrol I fell asleep and walked slap into the back of a car parked beside the road, sustaining a bloody nose and a badly cut lip.

I realised then that I could not go on like this, and that if I wanted to pass this examination I must get a transfer to some job in which I could have sufficient time off duty to enable me to do the necessary cramming. I therefore applied to go back to the Transport Section, and as a result quickly found myself posted once more with the old gang in the Mount Scopus garage.

Surviving a good deal of ribbing from those of my fellow drivers who were less ambitious to be real policemen than I had professed to be, in due course I passed the examination.

By virtue of my law and language qualifications I was now more than eligible for promotion, but competition was keen, and there was already a long waiting list, not only for opportunity to undergo the arduous promotional course, but also of those who had already passed it but for whom there were no immediate vacancies in the

elevated rank of corporal; I therefore jumped at an offer of a transfer to Nazareth as the driver to the Assistant Superintendent in charge of the division—a corpulent, likeable Irishman named Patsy Hackett.

I never regretted this step, for during my stay there I learned (much of it by trial and error) a good deal about practical police work and criminal investigation.

I also met there Bob Jarrett, a man slightly younger than myself, who was to become my firm friend. A year seems a long time to spend in a little place like Nazareth, but in fact the days flew by. Most week-ends we were either visited by the cricket or soccer teams of other formations or we ourselves went to another district to play an away match. The cricket teas—wonderful cream cakes and other delicacies produced by the handful of police wives—were the social events of the week, and the cricket itself, if it didn't quite come up to Test Match standards, at least provided some exciting moments. I shall never forget, for instance, the match in which we got the formidable Force team from Jerusalem— the Palestine champions—all out for forty-seven runs, nor the thrill it gave me to dismiss their leading batsman with a brilliant catch (brilliant, that is, by my standards, for I am no cricketer) on the boundary of our pocket-handkerchief-sized ground. True, we in our turn were dismissed for a mere twenty-six, but that in no way dimmed our own achievements for us.

Bob was an excellent sprinter, and when he went to Jerusalem to compete in the annual police sports there I went with him in a more modest role as a member of the Divisional first-aid team. I was—and still am—a keen St. John's man, but I did not possess the ability to play at make-believe, without which one could not do well at these competitions.

The police sports were an event which nobody who saw them will ever forget. In addition to the usual field and track events there was a full-scale mounted gymkhana—jumping events of all kinds,

tent-pegging competitions, and a breathtaking musical ride by swarthy Bedouin members of the Police Camel Corps from Beersheba, which always included a jump over a human fence. The camels performed the intricate movements of this ride with such a supercilious and condescending air that we were left in no doubt as to the great favour they were thereby conferring upon us.

The sports this year coincided with a riot at the New Gate of the Old City, and Bob and I, together with most of the other competitors, were quickly grabbed and sent to the scene of the trouble. I never fully learned what had started it all, but Arabs had been stoning Jews from the top of the gate, and when we arrived they turned their attention on us. In those days, although we were heavily armed, we were not expected to use firearms in any circumstances, and in consequence we suffered many minor casualties in our ranks from a mob which took good care to keep well out of range of our baton charges.

I had taken my St. John's first-aid haversack with me in the truck, so that I was able to obtain a lot of useful practice in bandaging split heads and faces, both British and Jewish. Busily at work in my temporary clearing station in a nearby courtyard, I was seen by the Deputy Inspector-General, Mr. Kingsley Heath, as a result of which I received my very first official commendation in Palestine.

There was one other outstanding event for me during my year in Nazareth. At noon one day we received an incoherent telephone call from Tiberias asking for help. Before details could be sought or given the line went dead, and we were unable to re-establish connection.

Three constables jumped into my car and off we went, flat out down the winding road, past Cana towards Galilee. The sky was clear over Nazareth and the sun was shining; the threatening clouds of the early morning had passed us by, but they could still be seen ahead of us in the east.

The distance by road from Nazareth to Tiberias is but thirty kilometres—under twenty miles; about six kilometres before reaching the town one comes over the brow of the hill and sees the sapphire-blue sea nestling right below, at the head of the Jordan valley; one then drops quickly down the tortuous road past the bullet-spattered "Sea-level" board (I never got used to the fact that the whole of the Sea of Galilee, the River Jordan and the Dead Sea are many hundreds of feet below sea-level), and eventually into the little town on the seashore. But this day when we crested the hill it was a very different sight which met our eyes—the sea was not sapphire, but chocolate, with the whipped cream of wind-tossed waves splattered all over it. The sun was not shining here, and it had been raining—hard. I had little time to consider the implications of this quick survey for, rounding a sharp bend, we landed straight into a river of mud which was pouring out of an adjacent wadi and down the road. The car turned gracefully sideways, pointing at the precipice on my left and, utterly out of control, was swept downstream for 200 or 300 yards before its own impetus carried it up a slight rise and thus beyond the clutch of the mud.

With brake-drums lined with slime, we continued in bottom gear, and eventually crawled down to where Tiberias stood, not as we had always known it on the shore of the sea, but actually now in the sea—or so it seemed.

Every street was several feet deep in water; struggling sheep and cattle were floundering about, desperately seeking for some foothold, while others, already drowned, floated past in the turgid water.

There was no sign of organised rescue work when we arrived, and all visible inhabitants were clustered on flat roofs or in upper rooms. The water from the cloudburst—for such it was —was now slowly receding, and we were able to wade, sometimes up to our armpits, through the streets, giving succour as and when we could.

By the late afternoon the streets were clear again, except for the thick residue of liquid mud washed down by the deluge from the hills above the town.

Many of the old houses had basements below ground-level, and these were, of course, still full of water; from some of them we recovered the bodies of the occupants—men, women and children—who, trapped like rats by the sudden inundation, had had no chance of escape.

There have been many bigger floods since, in many different parts of the world, and the Tiberias disaster has long since passed into oblivion.

For me, however, the hymn “Fierce raged the tempest” will always have a very special significance. But there was nobody there—on this occasion—to say “Peace! Be still!”

Chapter 5

TRAFFIC IN HAIFA

My days in the town in which Jesus grew to manhood were numbered, however, and in the middle of October, having passed a promotional course in Jerusalem, I was elevated to the exalted rank of corporal and transferred to Haifa.

After a short but fascinating spell on Mount Carmel, I found myself posted to the Central Police Station in Haifa as Contravention Officer.

The station area included all the suqs and markets of the Arab part of the town, and my job (as my new chief described it to me) was to convert Eastern bazaars into Western boulevards.

The Arab shopkeepers had always used the public footpaths to display their wares, and their wives had, since the beginning of time, dumped their garbage in the street. Why (they wanted to know when I started on my new job) should they stop now ? Obstruction? Well, people can always walk round it—the road isn't completely blocked, and there's plenty of time. Hygiene? Flies? Disease? But look at me. I'm not ill, and little Ahmed's well enough —apart from his sore eyes, that is, and the fact that he'll soon be blind. The Ottoman Penal Code says we mustn't? Well, that's a Turkish law, and the Turks never bothered us about little things like that when they were our masters.

Cleaning up the Haifa suqs, then, was rather like watering the garden with an eye-dropper, but by concentrating on one area at a time, with the assistance of one British constable we were able to make some small impression.

While I was engaged on these duties I had a sharp lesson on the unpredictability of human nature; this assistant of mine, a charming young man with whom I worked in close contact all day, tried to commit suicide at dawn one morning by driving a bayonet into his heart.

His room-mate wrested the blade from him, but not before he had inflicted a wound sufficiently serious to require medical attention.

While this most unfortunate incident was being considered by the powers-that-be I did not leave his side by day or night. During this time I got to know him—as I thought—very well; he was the youngest son of a very good family, but, in contrast to his brothers, who had done well for themselves in the Church and the Navy, he considered himself to be an utter failure.

Although he had been educated at a famous public school and bore the unmistakable stamp of good breeding, he felt that he could never pass the law and language examinations necessary to qualify for promotion in the Force, and that he was therefore doomed to remain a constable for the rest of his life. He couldn't even decide to kill himself, he said, without making a complete mess of it.

However, from this abyss of despair he had steadily risen during the course of our long talks together to more normal levels of thought, and it seemed to me that he now realised that his action had been both weak and unnecessary. When therefore the edict came through from Jerusalem that he should be sent home under escort I was so appalled at his reaction to it that I made the strongest possible appeals for him to be allowed to remain, pointing out that if he were indeed sent back to England he would never be able to face his family, but would feel himself honour bound to jump overboard on the way.

My arguments prevailed, and he was permitted to stay; soon after, by mutual agreement, he was transferred to Nazareth,

apparently perfectly happy and fully recovered from his fit of depression. Two months later, with no outward sign of the acute anguish he must undoubtedly have been suffering, he shot himself through the head with a Service rifle. I reproached myself bitterly for his loss, feeling that somehow I had failed him; and yet I could not see—and still cannot— what other action could have been taken which would have had a better chance of success.

In April, 1935, I was transferred yet again—this time to take charge of the Northern District Traffic Section. This section consisted of four mounted constables, four motor-cyclists, a traffic patrol car, and some twenty-odd British police; in addition there were some thirty Palestinian police, both Arab and Jew, who performed point duties and served summonses. Besides carrying out all traffic duties for Haifa and the surrounding rural areas, we had also to undertake the testing of all vehicles and drivers.

This testing of vehicles was a constant struggle to maintain a reasonable standard of safety on the roads, and to this end brakes, lights, horn, tyres, alignment and general condition were subjected to rigorous checking each year before any taxi, car, bus or truck was passed for a licence. But a clean bill one day did not mean that that vehicle was in safe condition the next, for very often the same set of good tyres would be used to get a score of Arab trucks or buses through the test, being replaced by tyres worn through to the canvas when the required certificate of fitness had been obtained.

The Jewish transport operators were on the whole more responsible in their outlook, but the problem with this section of the community was the vast numbers of refugee immigrants from Nazi tyranny—highly-skilled doctors, lawyers, dentists, architects, musicians, economists and other professional men —who were desperately trying to obtain at all costs a busdriver's licence, with the possibility of reasonable employment which went with it. Quite rightly the standards of health, eyesight and driving experience required of a bus-driver were very high, and in consequence there

were many attempts, almost all unsuccessful, to bribe the police testers to give licences to people who had no hope of obtaining them on their merits.

In common with their brethren throughout the Middle East, the drivers of Haifa were in the habit of driving on their horns rather than on their gear boxes; in consequence, the town could be a pretty noisy place, especially down in the port area when there was a tourist ship in. The Superintendent of Police in charge of the Northern District said to me one afternoon, after watching for a time the taxis jockeying for position outside the port gates: “There’s too much horn-blowing in this town. Stop it.” “Yes, sir,” I answered. It had been a very hot and trying day, and everybody’s nerves were a little frayed, so I did not take these instructions too literally. I did, however, warn all patrols to clamp down on unnecessary horn-blowing at every opportunity.

There was, it seemed to me, a marked improvement in the situation within three days. On the fourth day I again had to go to see the Superintendent in his office; on the way there I wondered whether he would mention the matter of noisy horns again, and decided that I rather hoped he would. The improvement was, I felt, so marked that he could but comment favourably on it. By the time I reached his office I was feeling thoroughly smug about the whole thing. I saluted smartly and wished him good morning. As he opened his mouth to speak there was a prolonged blast from a particularly healthy horn in the street below the window. His mouth remained open in suspended animation until the din ceased, and then closed with a snap. “Didn’t I tell you to stop all horns?” he enquired mildly. “Yes, sir,” I replied, and was about to add, “But I thought you meant the excessive use of horns, sir,” when I saw the glint in his eye, and shut my mouth quickly. “Very good, sir,” I added instead, and got out of his office without broaching the matter which had been the original cause of my visit.

Back in my own office I considered the situation. The law said

that the unnecessary or excessive use of a warning appliance constituted an offence, but it did not define excessive or unnecessary. Taxi-drivers knew better than to use their horns to attract customers or to call a friend out of a nearby cafe if there was a traffic policeman in the offing, but it had always been considered legitimate to hoot long and loudly to encourage a donkey boy or a camel-driver to get his charges out of the middle of the road, though, when one thought about it, it did little good.

So be it. We had an emergency meeting of all the forces at our disposal and made our plans accordingly. By the next evening the whole noise pattern of the town had changed— the familiar sound of the motor horn had disappeared completely, leaving an eerie vacuum broken only by strings of flowery curses from taxi-drivers suffering from a serious frustration complex. Victory was ours.

A day later, and we were not so sure. The taxi-drivers had solved to their complete satisfaction this latest irksome restriction devised and inflicted on them by the unpopular traffic police, for as they drove along with their accustomed verve and recklessness their left hands beat out a hilarious non-stop tattoo on the outside panels of their driving-seat doors. This was even greater fun than horn-hooting, for now one could not only go all out to out-bang one's rival, but could also demonstrate to the world at large one's skill and daring at driving single-handed.

The effect was not quite what any of us had anticipated, but it did result in a reasonable compromise and less hooting than one could expect to find in any other Eastern town or, indeed, in some capitals of Europe.

Chapter 6

BACKGROUND TO REVOLT

At the end of 1935, having completed a three-year tour of duty, I came home on leave once more, but this time there was no doubt in my mind as to whether or not I should go back. As it turned out, my confidence was justified, for I returned to find, to my great surprise, that I had been promoted from corporal to Head Constable, a rank comparable to that of a sergeant-major in the Army.

I was delighted, too, to be posted back to my old job on the Traffic Section in Haifa, and I quickly got down to my duties with renewed energy and enthusiasm.

Things were changing, however; the comparatively carefree life we had known for the last few years in which we performed straightforward police work (albeit with an Oriental flavour) was slipping away, never to return. There was now a steady flow of Jewish refugees from Nazi-dominated Europe, some prosperous, some lowly, some arrogant, some humble, but all looking upon Palestine as the Promised Land in which they were seeking either permanent or temporary asylum, depending on their experiences in Germany and their optimism or otherwise for the future.

They brought with them a tremendous vitality, a zest for life and for living. They invaded the existing Jewish towns and built new ones. They overflowed to the kibbutzim, the communal settlements where everybody owns everything and nobody owns anything—not even their own children.

They brought with them an immense appetite for the good

things of life, and the ability to live, where necessary, a life of monastic frugality.

They brought also, in place of the money they were not permitted to take out of Germany, vast quantities of magnificent old furniture, fine glass, china and silver.

And they brought music to Palestine—wonderful music, such as only Jews can play—the music of the masters and of the tsigane, the Hungarian rhapsody and the Viennese waltz. They formed the superb Palestine Symphony Orchestra and brought Toscanini and Sargent to conduct it. They put gipsy orchestras into many of the cafes in Jerusalem and Haifa and into the fashionable sea-front rendezvous of Tel Aviv.

They brought prosperity to the beauty parlours, the shopkeepers and the restaurateurs, and to the second-hand shops where they disposed of their heavy furniture (far too big for most of the modern Jewish tenement buildings) at negligible prices.

They lived in tents and shacks in the agricultural colonies, and in teeming masses in every nook and cranny of every apartment in the cities, and they paid fancy figures for any property, however dilapidated, which was offered for sale.

They also bought every bit of land which came on the market, and made irresistible offers to absentee Arab landlords for land which had been Arab owned and occupied for countless generations.

When Allenby conquered Palestine for Britain in 1918 the defeated Turks destroyed all their land registry records, leaving the new administration to sort out the rightful owners of the land as best they might. Every possible publicity was given to the need for re-registering ownership of land, and while some complied with these instructions many, through ignorance or misapprehension, failed to do so. A number of unscrupulous educated Arabs, many of

them residing among the fleshpots of Beirut and the Lebanon, saw their chance and took it with both hands, registering in their own names vast tracts of land to which in fact they had no real claim.

Thus it was that *fellahin* who had always believed themselves to be the owners of the land which their ancestors had farmed for generations suddenly found themselves evicted and replaced by Jews.

The fact that the new occupants brought modern farming methods and equipment into use, thereby increasing immeasurably the crop yield of the land, was no consolation to the dispossessed peasants. And, of course, the newcomers were heavily subsidised by world Jewry.

At the start of the British occupation of Palestine the population had consisted of approximately 1,000,000 Arabs and a mere 50,000 Jews. Now, with the added impetus of events in Germany, the Balfour Declaration took on a new significance. This Declaration, contained in a letter written by Lord Balfour to Lord Rothschild on November 2nd, 1917, was a prime cause of all the trouble and bloodshed which was to occur during the British Mandate in Palestine, and for that reason it is worth quoting in full.

It reads: “His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.”

An interesting bit of diplomacy, surely: just what it meant, and how it could be implemented, Balfour omitted to say. Perhaps he found it difficult to explain how large numbers of foreigners (and it must be remembered that the Jews originated in Ur of the Chaldees in Iraq and ceased to occupy Palestine as a nation 1,400 years ago)

could enter a country without prejudicing in some degree the civil rights of the existing communities. Or, perhaps in 1917 this statement appeared to be of little import, for Hitler was still a corporal and Zionism, with little or no positive attraction for world Jewry as a whole, was the dream of a handful of idealists.

It must have seemed a very cheap price indeed to pay for the wonderful new explosive just invented by Dr. Haim Weiszman, at whose instigation the declaration was made, but in fact it was to cost hundreds of fine British lives, tens of millions of pounds in hard cash, and to mean virtually the end of British prestige in the Middle East.

In 1922 the British Government announced that it interpreted the Balfour Declaration to mean: “not the imposition of Jewish nationality upon the inhabitants of Palestine as a whole, but the further development of the existing Jewish community in order that it may become a centre in which the Jewish people, as a whole, may take, on grounds of religion and race, an interest and a pride.” And nobody was much the wiser.

At the start of the British Mandate in Palestine Jewish immigration increased steadily, reaching a peak in 1924-5. It then fell off sharply and for some years more Jews left the country than came into it. The rise of Hitler and Nazi persecution, however, turned the eyes of German Jewry once more towards the Promised Land; the immigration figures shot up again and quickly broke all previous records. It was not surprising, therefore, that the Arab population as a whole viewed with apprehension the influx of these fugitives from Germany, and with dismay the speed with which Arab areas were quickly changing into Jewish colonies.

The Arabs themselves had no effective political leadership at this time; the best they could produce was the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin el Husseini, who could only claim to represent the majority (but not all) of the Moslem community and none at all of the Christian Arabs. Haj Amin, unfortunately for the Arab people,

did not prove able to argue their case eloquently and effectively in the right quarters.

He toured the various towns with a retinue of politicians, addressing mass meetings of excited Arabs in the mosques and the public squares, and a spate of demonstrations and disturbances followed in his wake.

Haifa flared up in May, 1936, when a large mob of Arabs assembled in the suq and marched down behind the Central Police Station towards the District Commissioner's Offices, waving improvised weapons and shouting anti-Jewish and anti-British slogans.

As so often happens in the colonies when trouble is brewing, the Public Works Department, with a degree of perspicuity which they rarely showed at other times, had only the day before off-loaded large piles of bricks and stones on the route taken by the demonstrators. When they found their progress blocked by a cordon of British Police, therefore, the temptation to make use of the ammunition so thoughtfully provided by the kindly authorities proved irresistible, and we were subjected to a hail of rocks and bricks.

Spicer had introduced into the Force a detailed drill for dealing with rioting mobs, designed to effect their dispersal with a minimum of injury to life and property.

It provided for the use, in the first place, of persuasion; then, if that failed (as it invariably did) the local equivalent to the Riot Act was read. This is a proclamation made in the King's (or Queen's) name, calling upon the demonstrators to disperse peacefully and go to their homes, and warning them that if they continue in their lawless acts they are liable to get hurt.

If this proclamation is of no avail, or if, because of noise or use of force, it cannot be given, the next step is to try one or more

baton charges, controlled by prearranged whistle signals.

Finally, if all other means fail and if the lives and property of peaceful citizens can be protected by no other possible means, firearms may have to be used.

It was a vital part of the operation that not one bullet more than is absolutely necessary to secure the desired objective must be used. To this end the police detailed to act as the armed party were not permitted to have their rifles loaded in advance but were required, if the time came to use them, to form a cordon across the street (if there were enough of them) and load their rifles with one round at a time, first holding the cartridge up at arm's length above their heads for a few seconds to enable the rioters to see for themselves (if they troubled to look—which, of course, they didn't) that it was real ammunition which was being loaded into the rifles and not blanks. Blanks are in fact never used on such occasions, for to do so would cause the rioters to lose the very healthy respect they generally have for firearms in the hands of disciplined and well-trained men.

Having got all his rifles publicly loaded with one round each only, the officer in charge has then to decide, on his own responsibility, how many of those rifles should be fired at the crowd to cause them to disperse without further argument. If he is wise he will decide that a single shot, effectively placed, may serve his purpose, and he will accordingly order, by touching him, one of the most reliable of his men, somewhere in the middle of the line, to take aim. This is done in a most determined manner, and very often the sight of a loaded rifle being deliberately pointed at them is sufficient to cause the most excited and venturous demonstrators to remember an urgent appointment elsewhere. If this happens, the order is given and the rifle is brought down again without being fired, and discipline has won the day.

Unless he is foolish, the officer in charge of the armed party will not order more than half his men to fire at once, thus reserving the

other half to deal with any desperate attack which the firing and the resultant casualties might cause.

He will not, as a rule, detail by name or police number those of his party whom he wishes to fire, for this may be heard and remembered afterward by people in the mob, and may result in violent retaliation later, especially if the armed party are locally-recruited policemen.

He will not, also, order his men to fire over the heads of the demonstrators, for this may well result in the death of some old lady a mile or more away, peacefully hanging out her washing in her own garden. If it is necessary, as a last resort, to open fire, such fire must be effective. That is not to say that every bullet must be aimed to kill; on the contrary, every effort is made to disable without causing fatal injury, and for this reason the order to fire always includes the words “at the knees”.

The responsibility of a Colonial police officer charged with deciding what force to use, when to use firearms and how many rounds to fire is great indeed—far greater than any responsibility his brother officer in the home forces is ever likely to be called upon to bear in a lifetime of service. If he opens fire too soon, or fires too many rounds, or if his policemen (God forbid!) get out of control and start firing indiscriminately in spite of their careful training, he alone will have to answer for his actions and theirs at the subsequent judicial enquiry. And it is surprisingly difficult, when the tumult and the shouting have died, to re-create in the cold, formal surroundings of a courtroom the atmosphere of passion, hatred and violence of the riot, and to answer satisfactorily the penetrating questions put to him. If the civil authorities decide that he failed to take all necessary action within his power to restore order, or if at the commission of enquiry it is held that he used more force than the absolute minimum which the members, from their second-hand knowledge of the affair, find to have been needed, then woe betide him. It is a narrow, precarious path indeed

which he must travel, and travel alone.

On this particular occasion in the Haifa *suq* we had enough police available to prevent the passage of the mob to the District Commissioner's offices, and when they stoned us and refused to disperse when warned to do so, we were able, by a series of short, sharp baton charges to cause them to retire in disorder into the maze of alleyways behind the Police Station.

The more venturesome—and possibly the more agile—of them would chance a split head by darting in sufficiently close to us to hurl a couple of bricks and then flee before we could catch them, but the majority tempered their valour with discretion and kept well beyond the effective range of our baton charges.

During this impasse a message was received to the effect that some of the mob had reassembled in one of the small streets leading from the *suq* on to Kingsway, the main thoroughfare into the City, and were even then subjecting passing Jewish motor traffic to heavy stoning. The senior officer present detailed Inspector Ring, Sergeant Clarke (who was armed with a rifle), six constables armed with batons and myself to go to the scene and take appropriate action. Even as we turned into Kingsway from the square in front of the Police Station a car crashed into the brick wall on the other side of the road. Leaving the remaining police to deal with that, we doubled towards our objective; it was only later that we learned that the Jewish doctor who had been driving that car had died from the combined effects of a stone, which hit him on his bare head, and of the subsequent crash.

We quickly reached the narrow street, only to find it blocked with a seething mass of Arabs, who promptly turned their attentions upon us. Our baton party was able to drive them back to some extent, but because of our few numbers and the danger of being cut off it was obviously impossible for us to advance beyond the alleyways which joined the street some 20 yards along it. Inspector Ring, who was in charge of the party, sent one man back to the

station to report the position and ask for reinforcements, and meanwhile we took shelter from the stones by standing on Kingsway on each side of the mouth of the side street, out of the direct line of fire from the mob. We were thus able, if not to restore law and order, at least to let what traffic there was on the main road pass on its way unmolested. As I stood there discussing the situation with my fellow Inspector, a beautifully-judged coping stone was dropped from the roof three floors above squarely on my head. Until that moment I had always looked upon our tin hats as unnecessary encumbrances, but there is no doubt whatever that mine saved my life on this occasion. I did not feel the coping stone land at all, nor did I remember falling flat on my face, for I was well and truly out for the count. As my companions were lifting me up I recovered consciousness, and was none the worse except for a jarred neck and sundry buzzing in my head, which soon developed into a splitting headache. Never again did I object to the discomfort of a steel helmet.

Our requested reinforcements did not materialise, and the mob became more daring and aggressive. Inspector Ring therefore decided to bring our “armed party” of one man into action.

This was the first occasion on which I saw the drill we had practised so frequently put into effect, and although I have seen it—and used it myself—many times since, I have yet to see a better demonstration of it than on this particular occasion. Inspector Ring blew his whistle and shouted out the requisite proclamation in Arabic, drawing to himself, as always happens when this job has to be done, a shower of missiles and abuse. Then Sergeant Clarke went through the rifle drill as calmly and as efficiently as if we were giving on the parade ground a demonstration of our humane methods to a delegation from the League of Nations.

He held the cartridge up over his head for—it seemed to me, watching from the shelter of a doorway—an unconscionable period before inserting it in the breech of his rifle and thrusting the bolt

home. Another pause, and after the cautionary words “At the knees of the crowd in front ...” came the long-drawn-out “P-R-E-S-E-N-T!” Forward went the safety catch, and up came the rifle, slowly and deliberately into the aim, and Nobby’s head went down and his cheek snuggled against the stock.

I saw several direct hits with stones and rocks on his body while he went through this drill, but he stood there, steady as a rock, resisting the irresistible instinct to flinch and duck.

Whether one of these projectiles hit him at the crucial moment, causing his rifle to lift slightly, I do not know; perhaps the main ringleader of the riot, the most daring, violent and hostile man there, was in the act of stooping to pick up a rock at the instant the sharp command “FIRE!” rang out, followed instantly by the crack of the rifle.

Whatever the combination of circumstances, there he lay, 20 yards away in front of the mob—stone-dead, with a neat, round hole between the eyes.

The report of the shot was followed by a split second of petrified silence and then by the vague sounds of myriad feet running for dear life; in less time than it takes to tell there was not a soul to be seen, and that particular riot was over.

In due course two of the mob we had succeeded in capturing earlier came up for trial before the chief magistrate, and my steel helmet was put in as an exhibit by the prosecution. I can still see the learned beak inspecting the 3-inch-long dent which ran fore and aft along it and, having done so to his apparent satisfaction, solemnly marking it “Exhibit A” and signing his name on it.

The prisoners got three months each.

Chapter 7

DEPARTURE OF A POLICEMAN

From this time onward there was a steady deterioration in the security situation throughout the country; in the rural areas armed gangs roamed from village to village, extorting money “for the cause” from peaceful citizens and staging sporadic attacks on Jewish colonies.

Arabs who were suspected, with or without reason, to be pro-British in their outlook were threatened or attacked, and as time went by many of them were brutally assassinated. Such acts of violence and terrorism in the towns were generally carried out by individuals sent in from the gangs in the hills—men who would not be known by sight if they were seen in the act of shooting their victims by people who might be prepared to identify them later.

It followed that the police soon viewed with suspicion any Arab wearing the traditional headdress of the *fellah*—the cloth *hatta* and the rope *agal*—which was very conspicuous among the red tarbushes invariably sported by the merchants and the *effendis* of the town. After one or two such envoys had been captured, largely as a result of this difference in dress, the edict went forth from the gang leaders in the hills that the tarbush would cease to be worn by patriotic Arabs anywhere in the country. After a few of those who considered themselves above such orders had been severely beaten up, the tarbush virtually disappeared from the public view, being presumably stored away in moth-balls until the coming of better times. Most of the merchants and shopkeepers found their new headgear decidedly awkward to manage, and many a curse was hastily stifled as its hanging tasselled ends knocked over a glass of tea or dangled inadvertently in a dish of olive oil.

Much of the available police strength was soon whittled away by the necessity to maintain guards throughout the twenty-four hours on important vulnerable points which might otherwise have been tempting targets for sabotage—Government offices, post offices, telephone exchanges, power stations, railway stations, ports, etc. All had legitimate claims for protection, and in consequence there were far too few men left to enable the Government to regain and retain the initiative over the terrorists.

It was, rightly, Government policy that all possible services should be maintained, and it followed that my own section was not depleted by the demands made upon the Force; we therefore continued with our normal traffic and licensing duties and at the same time constituted ourselves a sort of first-line striking force for use in an emergency. I soon found that when we were called out the incident was already over before we could get there, and our job was always to remove the corpses, clear up the mess and interrogate witnesses who invariably steadfastly refused to admit that they had ever witnessed anything.

It was clear that individual armed gangsters were able to roam the town at will, carrying out their acts of violence as opportunity offered and then disappear in the maze of alleyways and lanes of the *suqs*.

We had ample police transport available beside the Traffic Office, and I therefore started a series of mobile patrols in the towns at all times of the day and night. I made no plans in advance, but whenever I gave an agreed signal everybody would drop whatever they were doing, grab their equipment and weapons and be on their way in prearranged parties in the twinkling of an eye. Frequently these sorties were made before breakfast, during the lunch-hour or after the office had closed for the night, but we often carried out short patrols without notice during working hours.

Not always did all the men go on these trips—sometimes the operation would consist of one or two vehicles only, but we could

when necessary concentrate as many as four trucks full of well-equipped policemen at any given point in the town. We could also be on our way in less than two minutes, from the time the alarm was given, at any time of the day or night.

It soon became clear, both from the decrease in the incidence of violence in the town and also from the reports of those of our men who were in close touch with the Arab world, that these surprise patrols were having a marked deterrent effect.

Bob Jarrett, now a sergeant, was my second-in-command during this time and he proved a tower of strength in creating an effective organisation, designed to combine normal police duties with emergency operations.

My two other sergeants, Wally Medler from Norwich and John Denley, son of a Cheltenham farmer, also played a vital part during these crucial days; between us we built up a wonderful team spirit among our small force, and achieved an enthusiastic co-operation in our efforts to maintain law and order in the town.

From these patrols we evolved a type of operation which to the best of my belief was entirely new, but which has since been used on many occasions elsewhere with varying degrees of success.

These operations, which we called “snap searches”, required split-second co-ordination and timing, and an intimate knowledge of the area in which we were working. They were designed to ensure that nobody using public thoroughfares, either on foot or in a vehicle, could do so with any degree of certainty that he would not be stopped without warning and thoroughly searched and interrogated by police without any chance of taking successful evasive action.

Sometimes these searches would be carried out at one of the busy centres, such as Khamra Square, the *Hesbeh* (the Arab vegetable market) or the area in front of the Eastern Railway

Station.

Precisely at zero hour police vehicles would converge on the selected area from every avenue of approach and swing across the road to block it; from each would de-bus armed policemen, all well drilled in their various roles—some would do the actual searching, inspection of identity cards and interrogation, while others would cover them with their drawn revolvers from close at hand. Still others would remain standing on the back of the police trucks, from which point of vantage they were able to observe any untoward movement within the search area and direct the attention of the search parties to it.

As this idea developed and our men entered into the spirit of it we were able to dash in to a selected area, search it quickly and be off to our next focal point with a minimum of delay and inconvenience to the law-abiding members of the public.

By this means we were able to create and maintain in Haifa a standard of law and order which was higher than that in any other of the large towns at that time.

During this period, inspired by our Deputy Superintendent, Bill Barker, we were investigating in Haifa the possibility of making an armoured car for our own use.

First we tried out the bullet-resisting qualities of the mild steel sheets which were all that was available locally. We found that two of these sheets, with a 1-inch filling of sand or sawdust between them, would stop a bullet fired from a British 303 rifle at any distance or angle. Based on these experiments, the first armoured car ever to be owned by a Colonial police force came into being. It was a huge and cumbersome creation, built on a 5-ton Bedford chassis, and in order to obtain some element of surprise it was skilfully painted by a local artist to represent a truck loaded with packing cases.

There was ample room in it for twenty or more police with full equipment, but as the chassis was already overloaded when the armoured car was empty we were obliged to keep the crew down to a minimum. Even so, it was an uncomfortable and dangerous ride—top-heavy, hard to steer and to stop, and always giving its occupants the feeling that it was about to turn turtle. However, we felt that these disadvantages were more than outweighed by the protection it afforded from sudden attack.

We had made one mistake, however; we had tested its protective properties only with the latest British rifles and ammunition, but these up-to-date weapons were not available to the gangsters with whom we were dealing, and in consequence they had to make use of what guns and ammunition—Turkish or German, generally—which they had been able to pick up during the First World War twenty years before.

I was in the armoured car on the first occasion on which it was fired upon with these antique weapons. It was only hit once, and that bullet went in through one side of the bulletproof body and out the other side as if it were made of cheese!

Although this contraption was not an unmitigated success it was the ancestor of many hundreds of armoured cars designed specially by and for, firstly, the Palestine Police and later the Malaya and Kenya police forces.

But although we were able to some extent to take the initiative in Haifa the general situation continued to deteriorate in the country as a whole. The armed forces were reinforced considerably, but, like the police, they also had to feel their way, devise new methods and think up new ideas to meet the increasing seriousness of the situation. We were not able to play our full part, for, due to the short time the Force had been employed in actual police duties, our intelligence services left much to be desired. We none of us knew much about Arab politics, organisations and personalities, and even less of their Jewish equivalents. And, of course, the time to

build up a Special Branch and an efficient intelligence network is when things are peaceful—it is too late when the balloon has gone up.

Some indication of the ineffectual state of our security organisation can be gleaned from the fact that, when it was decided at a high level to arrest and deport the Grand Mufti for his activities, the news of this decision leaked out and he was able to make good his escape over the border before the police could grab him.

Now that I was a full Inspector I found myself posted from my old love, the Traffic Section, to be second-in-command of the Haifa Urban Division. In this capacity I was responsible to my chief for the efficient administration of all the police in Haifa town, for all matters connected with discipline, pay, rations, quarters, postings, stores and equipment and the thousand and one things which have to be dealt with in such an organisation.

My promotion was a mixed blessing, for I was now of a rank where I could no longer be permitted to live with any men in a police billet, but must find quarters for myself elsewhere. In this I was lucky in finding a room with a sanitary inspector and his wife, who were so Welsh that they spoke no English to each other.

There I had a comfortable bed and a reasonable breakfast, but lunch and dinner I had to get outside—generally at the Jordania, a little Jewish cafe which catered mainly for British police and which had a never-ending supply of the most delicious steaks I have ever had anywhere—so good were they, in fact, and so unlike any beef that I have had before or since, that I strongly suspect that they must have been camel.

During this period I was placed in command of the first mobile column to operate in Palestine; this column, which was officially christened “Morcol”, was stationed at the Jewish colony of Sheikh Bureik on the Nazareth Road. Though I received no concise

instruction as to our functions, I gathered that we were expected to sally forth on foot or in trucks and round up the gangs who were making a nuisance of themselves in the area. Unfortunately, I cannot claim that “Morcol” was a success; we had no sources of local intelligence, and the patrols which I led blindly over the hills by night and by day never even caught a glimpse of a gangster. This, clearly, was not the answer to the situation, and after a few weeks of sincere but ineffectual endeavour, to my great relief we were withdrawn to Haifa.

In 1937 R. G. B. Spicer had a narrow escape from death when a would-be assassin emptied his pistol into his car at point-blank range when he was being driven through the gates of the Russian Compound in Jerusalem on his way to Police Headquarters. From then on he went everywhere with a strong armed escort, charged with the task of keeping him safe—a job they did with marked success. Obviously it would have been quite a feather in the terrorists’ cap if they had been able to assassinate the Inspector-General of Police, and as far as most of the junior ranks of the Force were concerned, we were delighted to see that he intended to take the necessary steps to ensure that this should not happen.

Strong forces were working against him, however, and the security precautions he took came in for harsh criticism, mainly from people who were never likely to find themselves in a similar position and who could have no idea what it was like to be an Aunt Sally for would-be assassins.

In the middle of the year he came home to England on sick leave, never to return.

Just after Spicer left for England Bob Jarrett and I both received an offer of a transfer as inspectors in the Nigeria Police. For Bob this constituted a promotion, but for me it was a straight transfer, for I was already a full Inspector. Very little information was available about these jobs, and as it was then considered impolitic to refuse offers from the Colonial Office we both accepted and came

home to England *en route* to our new posting.

We went together to a Colonial outfitter not far from Piccadilly Circus and ordered our new uniform—mess kit, Wellingtons, mosquito boots, camp kit, and many other expensive items which we were informed it was essential to take with us.

While I was in my outfitters one day, trying on my new uniform and surveying with a good deal of apprehension my steadily mounting bills there, the then Deputy Commissioner of the Nigeria Police came in, and I was able to ask him to clarify some of the points which had been troubling me. As a result of what he told me about the job which I had accepted, and about its status and my prospects of advancement, I made a quick decision, which I never had cause to regret, to return once more to Palestine—provided, of course, that I could get the Colonial Office to agree to this *volte-face*.

After giving instructions that work on my kit should stop, I went to plead my cause and, to my surprise, met with little objection when I said I did not now wish to go to Nigeria.

I received a letter from Spicer congratulating me on my appointment, and when I answered saying I had changed my mind and enquiring whether the rumours of his resignation were true, I got the following reply:

> "It is your own life, and your future prosperity that matters, nothing else. You will go to the top, wherever you are; I personally thought your chances were better in Nigeria than Palestine, but I trust your decision has been a sound one. Good luck to you and all those splendid fellows whom you will be working with in Palestine. I am still completely knocked out. Of course, I did not resign; as a matter of fact, the lads know me too well to stomach that. But the way they've dropped me out of the Service—in the way they did, because they would be embarrassed by my corpse, at the end of my Colonial Police career without

recognition, is not only hard to bear, but an insult to the Force I had the honour to command. God bless you."

I believe I felt almost as badly about it as he did, for I had had the opportunity of seeing with my own eyes the tremendous transformation he had made in the Palestine Police. He was a policeman to his fingertips and, although he was in many respects also a showman, everything he did was done in the best interests of the Force he loved.

Bob Jarrett would, I think, have liked to return to Palestine with me, but his commitments were such that it was an economic impossibility for him. It was a sad day for me when we came to the parting of the ways, but let it be said that he has carved out for himself a brilliant career in the Nigeria Police and has risen to a very high rank there. I like to think that the experiences and adventures we shared both in Nazareth and Haifa have stood him in good stead, as they certainly have me.

And so, alone, I returned to Palestine.

Chapter 8

MURDER OF A COMRADE

Subversive and terrorist activity in the Holy Land was now no longer the monopoly of the Arabs.

In Jaffa Port a barrel of cement—one of a large shipment consigned from Belgium to a Jewish organisation in Tel Aviv — slipped from the sling when being unloaded and smashed on the quayside below, revealing not cement, but brand-new Mauser automatic weapons and ammunition.

Most of the shipment had already been delivered to a waste lot and had vanished into thin air, but in the barrels which were left the police seized enough firearms to equip a small army. We never knew just how much the full consignment contained, but it must have been a vast quantity, costing hundreds of thousands of pounds.

The names “Hagana” and “Irgun Zvai Leumi” began to appear in police reports and intelligence summaries; we learned that the former, “The Defence” in Hebrew, was the illegal armed organisation of the Mapai or Labour Party, and that the latter, the “National Military Organisation”, was the striking force of the right-wing Revisionist Party.

The Irgun, as I shall refer to it from now on, had a badge which was to become a very common sight in Palestine, appearing at the top of every publication it issued—a brawny arm grasping a rifle with bayonet fixed, superimposed on a map of the whole of Palestine, Jordan, Syria and the Lebanon and flanked by the Hebrew words “*RakKakh!*” (“Only Thus!”)

Let it be said now that the Hagana, while never averse to arming

and equipping themselves, both before and during the war, by theft or bribery from military stores, did not at any time indulge in a campaign of violence and assassination.

The same could not be said for the Irgun. Indeed, they got off to a good start. In Jerusalem the name of Inspector Cairns was coming into prominence as an expert on Jewish politics and quasi-political organisations—a subject of which few Jews and until then no police or administrative officers had any knowledge at all. Cairns was about the first British policeman to speak fluent Hebrew, and he had many Jewish friends and contacts.

They warned him that he was in danger, but they could not save him. Indeed, it is doubtful whether Cairns himself could do much about it. If he had gone to his superiors and reported that he was about to be assassinated by Jews, they would probably have told him that he had been working too hard and needed a holiday.

He did, however, get his friend Inspector Barker to go to and from the office with him every day, and he made sure that they were always both armed.

But firearms were not the answer. As they both walked over the stretch of waste ground which led to their quarters a remote-controlled land-mine was detonated under their feet and they were both blown to pieces.

There was a loud outcry in the local Jewish Press about this outrage, but no active assistance was given to bring the persons responsible to justice.

Once more I was posted to Haifa, but this time I was put in charge of the newly-formed Inlying Picquet, a striking force of well-trained and well-equipped British police.

This Picquet was actually accommodated at Police Headquarters, and so organised that there was always a strong body of mobile shock troops available to turn out at a moment's notice.

We operated throughout the Northern District of Palestine, performing any duties in which we could be used to good effect. My second-in-command was Sergeant Jack Bourne, and my old friend Wally Medler had also been posted to my unit from the Traffic Section.

One of the tasks we liked not at all was to be present to maintain law and order when Arabs were being evicted from land some twenty miles away at Wadi Hawareth which had been purchased by the Jews.

On such occasions either Jack Bourne or I would go with half our force to the scene of the eviction while the other remained in reserve in Haifa.

On one fateful day, however, for some reason which in retrospect I have never been able to understand, I decided to take Jack Bourne with me to Wadi Hawareth and to leave Wally Medler in charge in Haifa.

We completed our task without incident and returned to Headquarters at 4 p.m. I went straight to the office of the Deputy Superintendent to report my return, but the look with which he greeted me made my heart miss a beat. Then he told me Wally Medler was dead—blown up with one of my constables by a Jewish booby trap. Apparently a message had been received after my departure saying that two suspicious sacks had been found under a seat in a train carrying Arab workers to the terminal site of the Iraq Petroleum Company in Haifa Bay. Wally had been sent out with his party to investigate. He had found the sacks in an empty train and, with the help of a young constable named Michael Ward, had thrown them out of the carriage window on to the ground below, ducking down as he did so. Nothing happened. He got down from the carriage and he and the constable went to make a further examination of the sacks.

They were tied up with string, and it was impossible to judge

their contents without opening them. Wally decided to open them. As he undid the string round the neck of the first, it exploded, killing both of them instantly. Poor Wally—how typical of him; he was always game for anything—always irrepressible and irresponsible. And what bad luck that it had to be him. We were none of us used to booby traps in those days, but even so I do not believe that either Jack Bourne or I could have treated those unexplained sacks so lightly. I went up to see Wally in the mortuary, and to say my goodbye to him. I still have the splinter-torn silver pencil I took from his breast pocket.

Once more “this dastardly outrage” was condemned by all sections of the Press.

The Irgun issued leaflets admitting responsibility for the incident, but stating that the bombs had been intended to kill Arabs and not British police; I was not able to derive any consolation from this explanation.

I took the opportunity to find out all I could about the Irgun, and I heard for the first time of the man who was reputed to be the brain behind these killings.

His name was Abraham Stern,

Abraham Stern, leader of the Stern Gang

Chapter 9

APEX OF THE TRIANGLE

With the departure of Bob Jarrett and the death of Wally Medler, Haifa had lost much of the savour it had previously held for me. I was lonely and miserable and found it difficult to concentrate on my work.

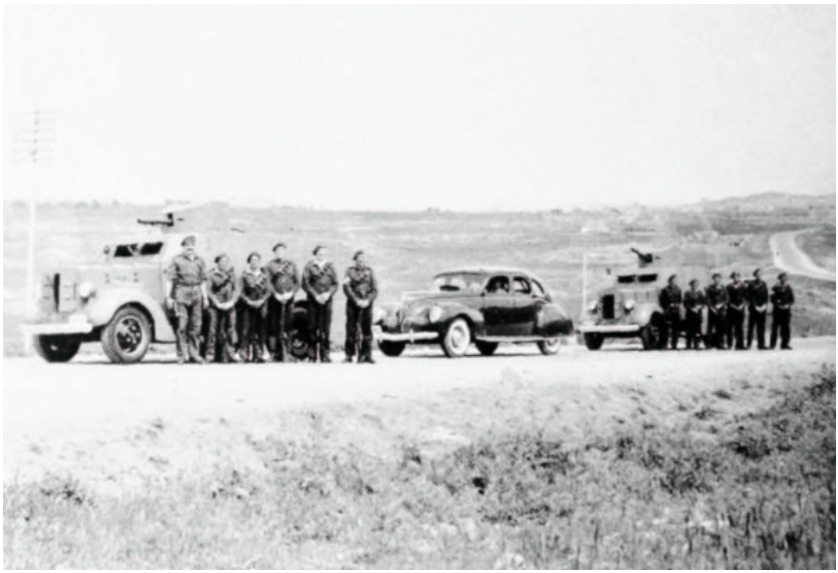
Our new Inspector-General, Major Alan Saunders, had been appointed and had duly arrived; though he came to us from Nigeria, he had previously been our Deputy Inspector-General in Palestine and was fortunately well known and much respected throughout the Force. His task was a difficult one, but he recognised the soundness of many of the methods introduced by Spicer, and not only retained but implemented them.

At the end of April, 1938, he sent for me and informed me that I was to be promoted to the rank of Assistant Superintendent and posted to command Jenin Division in the Samaria District. At that time Samaria was popularly known as “The Triangle of Terror”, the divisions of Nablus and Tulkarm forming the base of the triangle, with Jenin as the apex.

My main task in my new command, I was informed, was to raise the standard of co-operation—then virtually nonexistent—between the police, the military and the administration to the highest possible level. As it turned out, this was to be the easiest part of my job, for I found both the Commanding Officer of the Border Regiment, which was stationed at Jenin, and the Assistant District Commissioner only too anxious that we should all pull together for the common good.

Jenin town, with an Arab population then of about 5,000, is situated at the point where the main road from Jerusalem sixty miles to the south divides, one branch going north-west towards Haifa and Acre and the other continuing due north to Affule and Nazareth. The division covered a large rural area and included sixty-six villages, some of which were accessible only on foot or by horseback. The land between the roads to Haifa and Affule formed the beginning of the large fertile Plain of Armageddon which stretched north and then east to the Jordan Valley, but the rest of the area was hilly, stony and largely infertile.

I decided that I should need a high-powered and reliable car for an area like this, so to celebrate my promotion I mortgaged my salary for years to come and bought myself a brand-new saloon of a famous American make—the first new car I had ever owned—for the princely sum of £280!



Road Patrol, Jenin

I arrived in Jenin early in May and wasted no time in setting about my task of securing co-operation. Apart from ill conceived "Morcol", I had not previously held any post of responsibility in a rural area; my personal experience of terrorism was confined to

Jerusalem and Haifa, so I realised that I had much to learn. Clearly the best man to help me was the Assistant District Commissioner, a Mr. Moffatt, so to him I went. He was by no means the usual type of administrative officer. He was, in fact, on the staff of the Irrigation Department and had been seconded to the administration some months before and sent to Jenin in the hope that he could do something to reduce the lawlessness which existed throughout the area. Previously Jenin had not been considered to be of sufficient importance to justify the posting of a British administrator, but had been in the hands of an Arab District Officer, supervised from Nablus, twenty-five miles away.

Moffatt had been stationed for many years at Beisan, a small Arab town near the Jordan and a few miles south of the Sea of Galilee. He was a confirmed bachelor, in his early fifties, and of shy and retiring disposition, probably due to a very marked impediment in his speech. He always wore very old clothes and a battered, greasy hat. He had, however, a profound knowledge of the Arabic language and an intimate understanding of the Arab mentality, which made him a very valuable servant to Government and earned for him the respect and affection of all who saw him at work. He gave me much good advice and painted for me a detailed picture of the set-up in the area, naming the gang leaders, the agitators and the dangerous villages.

Rebel activity at that time consisted of ambushing any small parties of police or troops, attacks on Government and civilian transport, sabotage of power and telephone lines and pylons, the assassination of any Arabs suspected of giving information to the authorities or who failed to contribute adequately to rebel funds, and generally anything which would be likely to cause embarrassment or inconvenience to Government. Fortunately, the district was completely Arab—there were no Jewish colonies in the area and no Jews either lived or worked in it. This relieved us of direct responsibility for the defence of such colonies, but, as it was an accepted fact that many of the attacks made on Jewish

communities in the adjacent areas of Haifa and Affule were the work of gangs which operated from the Jenin hills, we were under a strong moral obligation to do everything in our power to curtail their activities.

Typical Arab Rebels

There were two self-styled “Commanders-in-Chief of the Holy Arab Revolution in Palestine”. Of these, Abdul Rahim el Haj Mohammed was the more important. He had his headquarters in the Tulkarm area, and his sphere of influence covered the whole of southern Palestine. He did not operate in the Jenin area, but occasionally passed through on his way to and from Syria. He was a man of comparatively high principles who sincerely believed in the cause for which he was fighting. He had his own code of honour, and as far as lay in his power he made his many followers adhere to it. He did not favour the murder of innocent or unarmed people, though he did from time to time authorise the assassination of Arabs who were considered to be traitors to the rebel cause.

The other Commander-in-Chief was Sheikh Yousef Said abu Dorrah, who, before the disturbances, had been a lemonade vendor in the Haifa suq, jingling his little brass cups to announce his

presence and serving his thirsty customers in time-honoured manner from the large brass urn strapped to his back. A black-bearded, undersized little man in the middle forties, he was a vicious and unscrupulous killer who showed no mercy to man, woman or child. He ruled his followers with a rod of iron, and the slightest disobedience to his wishes was likely to result in instant death.

Sheikh Yousef Said abu Dorrah, Commander-in-Chief of the Arab Revolution

Abu Dorrah was born at Silet el Hartiyeh, a village in the Jenin area, whence he directed a campaign of bloodshed throughout northern Palestine. His own permanent bodyguard consisted of about thirty picked men, some of whom were Syrians, but he could quickly muster several hundred armed men from the villages when he needed them. He also had at his command a number of thugs who specialised in committing assassinations in urban areas where the gangs could not operate. His first lieutenant was one Yousef Hamdan, whom Moffatt considered to be the cleverest of the rebel leaders, and whom I was later to capture in somewhat unusual circumstances.

I had at my disposal one British inspector—"Tashy" Smith —and about six British and fifty Arab police, including a mounted section of one British sergeant and twenty Arab mounted constables. The Arab police in general were ineffective, partly through fear of reprisal against themselves or against their families who were left unprotected in their villages, and partly because of a cordial dislike for the policy we were trying to enforce, for they, like the rebels, had no desire to see their homeland overrun by the Jews.

There was one constable—a handsome young Christian Arab from Nazareth—who was of great assistance to me in my first few weeks. When he had enlisted in the Police Force he had taken an oath of loyalty to the Government, and throughout his all too short service he did his duty in accordance with his own interpretation of the terms of that oath. I used him no more than I believed to be absolutely necessary, and I did all I could to protect him. I warned him on many occasions that he was not to leave the police station either by day or night without my knowledge, but alas! one day he went i oo yards down the main street of the town to buy some food and was quietly kidnapped by two gangsters who had been hanging about for days looking for a chance to get him. He was taken to a neighbouring village, beaten up and then shot in cold blood by one of abu Dorrah's lieutenants; although every available soldier and policeman was mustered in our ceaseless efforts to save him, we

were not successful. This boy's death was a very bitter lesson for me, and never again did I, if I could possibly avoid it, use any Arab or Jewish member of the Force in circumstances which would be likely to jeopardise his own future safety.

The Border Regiment was encamped around the old railway station building, about half a mile from the town and on the edge of the plain. The battalion offices were established in the booking hall, while what had been the stationmaster's residence on the upper floor now served as the Officers' Mess. Wooden hutments and tents to provide sleeping accommodation had been erected round this building, and the whole camp was surrounded by barbed wire in sufficient depth to preclude the possibility of a successful direct attack in strength. About twice a week, however, the rebels, nothing daunted, opened fire on the camp from the hills beyond, to be answered immediately with machine guns and mortars from the defence points below. As all lights had to be extinguished when shooting started, these attacks had a certain nuisance value, but although neither the wooden huts nor the tents were bulletproof it was a very rare thing for injury to be suffered by either persons or property. The Arabs are notoriously bad shots at distances over 10 yards, and as they were for the most part using old German and Turkish rifles left over from the First World War their lack of success is perhaps understandable.

The Borders had company outposts at three strategicallysituated villages in the district, but even so there was generally ample manpower available at Jenin to carry out any operation which was decided upon. The question was: how were we to make the best possible use of these men? It was clear that some action was required other than the abortive attempts which were then being made by police, with military support, to investigate incidents which had already occurred. The initiative was in fact very much with the rebels, with the forces of law and order trailing along behind.

Nearly every village had its own gang which could turn out armed and in uniform at short notice to carry out an attack on a passing patrol or burn down a dozen electricity poles. These incidents almost always occurred during the night, and when the police arrived at dawn the villagers would be going about their lawful business, all evidence of their nocturnal adventures safely buried and not so much as a stifled yawn to suggest that they had not just enjoyed a good night's sleep! The *mukhtar*, with hand on heart and the name of Allah on his lips, would swear that the outrage had been committed in the vicinity of his village for the express purpose of getting him into trouble and to punish him for his refusal to succour the rebels, for was he not known to one and all as a loyal servant of Government ? He had heard the shooting, of course, but he had been sure that the gang had come to assassinate him, and he had shut himself in his house and barred the door. He was therefore, with the greatest regret, unable to assist the police by identifying the members of the gang. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, it was difficult to discredit these protestations of innocence and, although effective preventive measures could sometimes be taken, the mukhtar and his village were generally given the benefit of the doubt.

Obviously, if we could get prior information as to gang movements and plans, we ourselves could take the initiative for a change, but although before my arrival Moffatt had been trying very hard to get a skeleton intelligence network started, he had not so far met with much success. Funds were available to pay generously for any information received, but this financial attraction was more than offset by the popular belief that we were not too clever at using informers, and were thus liable through carelessness to bring about their abrupt demise at the hands of their irate fellow-conspirators.

Though this may have been true in some respects, I personally found little justification for the belief. In the course of my service in Palestine I was to deal with many informers of all kinds, both Arab

and Jewish; I invariably took infinite pains to keep their identity completely concealed, but even so, many of them came to a sticky end.

In practically every case this was due to the mentality of the man himself—the same mentality which had prompted him to offer to act as a Government spy in the first place. He considered himself an important fellow, but his friends did not show him half the respect to which he was entitled. Well, he knew somewhere where his services would be properly appreciated, and where he would even be paid good money for passing on a little harmless information about the new plans which were being made.

The first contact established, he finds himself with a pocket full of cash and the prospect of an easy living for years to come. He has driven a hard bargain with the police officer and has firmly declined the latter's suggestion that he should only take a little money with him and allow the rest to accumulate on his behalf until the time comes to get away. He's too wise a bird to fall for that one, and anyway he's far too clever for it ever to become necessary for him to leave his present haunts. Later, when the police have acted on his information, he cannot resist a self-satisfied smirk when he sees the consternation on the faces of his comrades. So they'd looked down on him, had they? Well, the boot was on the other foot now, with a vengeance. He'll have them dancing to a pretty tune before he's finished! But now he must commiserate with them and take the lead in denouncing the traitor in their midst, whoever he may be. And he would give some money to the wives of the two of his friends who had been caught by the police. After all, he can afford to be generous— there is plenty more where that came from. . . .

It is only a matter of time before the riddle is solved; the known weak mentality, the alternating complacency and protestations of unswerving loyalty, the sudden affluence; they all add up to one thing, and another bullet-riddled body is found in the gutter with

the usual notice, pinned to the breast, stating that the wearer has been tried by a rebel court as a traitor to the cause, found guilty, sentenced to death and duly executed.

Dealing with professional informers is one of the least attractive parts of a policeman's job, but it is also one of the most important. Far more police work is done through informers, paid and unpaid, than the general public realise, and if the time ever comes when people cease to give information to the police, then law and order will be a thing of the past.

But to return to Jenin. I found myself somewhat troubled over the presence of my mounted police. I was making little or no use of them, and the horses were eating their hearts out in the stables.

I decided, therefore, with considerable misgiving, to experiment with mounted patrols around the more remote parts of my division.

Mounted patrol, Jenin

I say with considerable misgiving, firstly, because I was not at all sure that horses had any useful part to play in the task which lay before us and, secondly, because I am no horseman. Indeed, I think that I had only once previously mounted a horse, and that was on the sands at a Belgian coastal resort; this venture had come to an abrupt conclusion when my mount decided to take a short cut home

by climbing up the steep sea wall, only to fall back on top of me.

On the occasion of our first mounted patrol, very conscious of my new riding boots and breeches, and trying hard not to trip over my spurs, I came out to the waiting column intending at all costs to hide the apprehension and uncertainty which was consuming me. The men were already mounted and were only waiting for me to do likewise and lead on into the hills. The sun was beating down unmercifully, but I was glad of it, for it might account for the perspiration pouring down my face and neck. It served to justify also the topee I was wearing in place of my usual *kalpak*, though I had donned it more as a sort of crash helmet than as a defence against heat-stroke.

An orderly was holding my horse for me in the sparse shade of an old olive tree beside the track near the Police Station. I acknowledged his salute, gathered the reins in my hand in the approved manner, placed my left foot in the stirrup and gave myself a mighty heave upwards, determined to make the saddle at the first attempt. Unfortunately, I had reckoned without the old olive tree. My head hit a sturdy branch with a tremendous thwack, and I found myself sprawling stunned across the saddle, with my legs hanging down one side of the surprised horse and my head and arms down the other. The topee was firmly rammed down over my eyes, with my ears stuck out at right angles, and I had to decide whether to try first to remove my hat from my eyes without falling or to reach the saddle without seeing. Somehow I managed to slide to the ground feet first and, using the animal to screen me as far as possible from my interested men, to extricate myself with some difficulty from my battered headdress. My mounted Sergeant, an ex-cavalry roughrider, was under no illusions as to my competency to lead a mounted patrol, but he managed to restrain what must have been an almost overpowering desire to laugh. He earned my heartfelt gratitude by roundly cursing the orderly for his stupidity, thus giving me a short breathing space in which to collect my wits.

I started that patrol with a headache, but I returned from it with my poor spine feeling much the worse for wear at both ends.

As a result of this sortie, I decided that mounted patrols were not the answer to our problems; in all fairness to myself, I must record that this decision was not motivated by my own personal feelings on the subject. While we could, if things went well, visit a large number of otherwise inaccessible villages fairly quickly, it did seem to me that we were a sitting target for a well-planned ambush, and that a handful of determined men hidden in the hills above us could wipe us out whenever they wished without loss to themselves. And, of course, they could see and hear us coming for miles and get into position at their leisure. Definitely, we should have run into serious trouble before we had done many such operations.

The author with members of his staff outside Jenin Police Station

At the nightly conferences presided over by Colonel Lay of the Borders and attended by his Adjutant, his Intelligence Officer, the Assistant District Commissioner and myself, the situation was carefully considered, the available information was assessed and plans were made for future combined military and police action. The scenes of previous rebel activity were studied and suitable ambush points on tracks likely to be used regularly by the gangs

were plotted on a large-scale map. Arrangements were then made for as many as possible of these ambushes to be operated every night. Secrecy was essential if we were to get results, and every effort was made to get the ambushes manned and evacuated before dawn without detection. Soft shoes were issued to all ranks, and the parties frequently walked many miles over the hills by circuitous routes to get to their posts; mobile patrols operated nightly on the main roads without lights, and at prearranged points the men would drop silently from the back of the moving trucks and dissolve into the darkness.

These arrangements were soon to prove their value, but before they did so Moffatt's own efforts to obtain reliable information bore fruit. At about 5 p.m. on August 4th he received a tip that Abu Dorrah and his gang were at that moment in the house of the mukhtar of Rummaneh, a village some eight miles north-west of Jenin town and about a mile west of the main Haifa road. They were about to take food in the house, after which they would return to the safety of the hills.

Early action was imperative if we were to benefit from this information; it would be dark soon after six, and there was no time to lay a complete cordon around the village. The senior Army officer present, Major Michael Ashby, signalled to his Company Commander at the Umm el Faham outpost, informing him of the position and directing him to close in on the rear of the village without delay—a march of about three miles over the hills—while a party of police and troops approached by truck along the track leading from the main road. The two small police armoured cars, locally made and mounted on Ford 30-cwt. chassis, were the fastest transport available at the time, so it was arranged that I should lead the party in one of these while the heavier Army trucks followed up as fast as they could.

When we turned into the track from the main road a single shot was fired from the hills overlooking the village. It was almost

certainly a warning given by one of the sentries posted by the gang, and we therefore drove at breakneck speed for the mukhtar's house, leaving the Army vehicles far behind. The track came to an end outside the large wooden doors leading into the inner compound of the *mukhtar's* house. The car skidded to a halt, and I almost fell through the small wicket gate which, to our good fortune, was not locked, and into the courtyard, closely followed by Sergeant Dennis Toulson and a British constable.

As I regained my balance I saw two Arabs leading a horse with a richly-caparisoned saddle and heavy saddle-bags towards an opening in the wall at the far side of the compound. A few other men stood around the courtyard, looking for all the world like small boys caught raiding an orchard. They all obeyed my order to stand still and raise their hands, and with my rifle at the ready I studied their faces to try to get an indication of what was happening. Obviously something was afoot: the warning shot and the guilty air were proof enough of that. But where was the gang ? Were they in the rooms on either side of me, where they would have been eating ? If so, I could expect to be the target for a hail of hot lead at any second. I signalled to my two men to get back into the archway behind me, and flattened myself against the wall so that I could not only cover the people in the courtyard, but also detect any movement at the open doors and windows on each side of me. I took stock of my captives. I could see no firearms of any kind, though the two men with the horse were wearing the usual gangsters' uniform. I seemed to recognise some of the others as members of the family which owned the house, but I did not know them well enough to be sure. In any case, I could take no chances.

I could hear the Army trucks grinding up the slope towards the house, and I could only hope that they would arrive before the tableau in the courtyard was galvanised into action.

Heavy firing broke out in the hills behind the house, some of it quite close and some apparently from a distance. I knew then that

the warning shot had served its purpose, and that in the interval of less than a minute between the time it was fired and the time of my entry into the courtyard the whole gang, with the exception of the two men with the horse, had dived through the opening in the wall to the hills beyond, where they were now being engaged by the troops advancing in extended order from Umm el Faham.

The Army trucks arrived, and the soldiers poured through and round the compound at the double to follow up the gang, but it was by then practically dark and contact was soon lost. The force from Umm el Faham had seen the gang escaping across their front and had opened fire at a range of about 600 yards, but the light was already too bad for accurate shooting.

The horse we had captured turned out to be Abu Dorrah's own steed, and the two men his personal servants. The saddlebags contained his personal effects, his bedding, his Verey light pistol, a large quantity of official rebel documents and correspondence, a magnificently embroidered gown in heavy white silk and a generous supply of a popular brand of chocolate laxative. From his records we gained much information as to the workings of his organisation, the names of his lieutenants, his supporters in the villages, and those whose support he considered half-hearted. All this we were able to put to good use in the months to come.

This, then, was the first of our combined operations which had a definite objective in view. We failed in our objective, but only by a very narrow margin, and we had for the first time made the hitherto untouchable Abu Dorrah take to his heels and run. His dignity must certainly have suffered in the process, and his prestige in the area must have decreased considerably.

Moffatt had not accompanied us to the village, as he had had an important appointment to keep in Nazareth, but nevertheless both he and the *mukhtar* of Rummaneh were to die violent deaths within a few weeks for the part they were suspected to have played in this affair; some two years later I was to see Abu Dorrah himself take a

last short walk from the condemned cell to the execution chamber in the Jerusalem Central Prison, there to pay with his own life for the revenge he took on the man who had been his host at the rudely interrupted dinner party at Rummaneh on that warm August evening in 1938.

Chapter 10

ASSASSINATION OF AN A.D.C.

The Assistant District Commissioner in Jenin, his Arab District Officer, his clerks, tax-collectors, cashiers, messengers and so forth were accommodated in offices on the upper storey of a large building opposite the mosque on the Nazareth Road. The ground floor and the central courtyard of this building were used as the Police Station and lock-up, but my own office and those of my headquarters staff were situated over a block of shops some 300 yards nearer the centre of the town.

The only entrance to the main building was guarded by day by two Arab policemen armed with loaded rifles, part of whose duty was to search for firearms any man entering the building, whether to go to the Police Station or to any of the offices on the upper floor. By night the heavy, iron-studded doors were closed and locked.

One of my few British policemen was detailed to act as personal escort and bodyguard to Mr. Moffatt, and his orders were that he should only leave him when he had been delivered to the safety of the military camp, where at the time he was taking his meals in the Officers' Mess and sleeping in a small room which had been made available for him. When Moffatt was working in his office in the town, the British constable would sit outside his office door with a loaded revolver on his belt and would personally satisfy himself that nobody was allowed inside without again being searched for concealed weapons. Arab police were always on duty in the Police Station below, and generally other British police were also present.

On August 23rd, 1938, I spent over an hour in Moffatt's office,

discussing the situation and planning further operations. At 11.30 a.m. I left, went past the British policeman—Constable Morgan—present at his post outside the door, past a number of people gossiping idly on the veranda, down the steps, past the two armed Arab policemen on duty at the entrance, and along the road and up to my own office. Within five minutes Constable Morgan arrived to give me some information which Moffatt had forgotten to pass on when I had been with him. I listened to the message, thanked him and told him to get back to his post. As I finished my sentence there was the sound of firing from the direction of the Police Station. Gun in hand and with an icy fear clutching my heart, I was out of the office, down the steep stone stairs and racing for the Police Station as fast as I could go, closely followed by Morgan, Inspector Smith, and one or two other British police who had been in adjacent offices.

I caught glimpses of a few Arabs scuttling into shops and around corners as I ran, but there was nothing to indicate whether any of them had been taking part in the shooting, and in any case my first task was to learn what had happened. There was no sign of the two Arab sentries in the entrance lobby—no sign of anybody at all in the Police Station, as I ran upstairs towards Moffatt's office. The veranda was deserted —the loungers, the gossiping clerks had all vanished—and every office door and window was shut. An eerie silence reigned, in striking contrast to the chatter of a few minutes earlier.

I tried the handle of Moffatt's door, but it would not open; I called: "Moffatt! Are you all right?" There was a faint scuffling sound behind the door, and I heard him say: "Is that you, Morton? Thank God!" After a moment I heard the key turn slowly in the lock, and then a dull thud as of a sack falling to the floor. I pushed the door open gently, feeling the obstruction of his body behind it. I squeezed through the narrow opening and there I saw him, lying on his back in a welter of blood. He gave me his usual shy grin, and lifted his hand a few inches off the ground in a familiar gesture of

friendly greeting. And then, in a faint, tired voice, but without any trace of its usual impediment, he started to apologise for all the trouble he had caused by sending Morgan away from his post.

As I bent to examine him I gave orders to the men behind me; I told one to take my car, find the civilian doctor in the town and bring him at once; another to mount guard at the main entrance and prevent anybody from leaving the building; a third to telephone to Colonel Lay, to tell him what had happened, and to ask for his Medical Officer and the military ambulance.

I carefully loosened his clothing; his head and face were uninjured, and all his wounds appeared to be in his body. I tried, without much success, to staunch the flow of blood and to do what I could to make him comfortable. I asked him what had happened and he told me that a little hunchbacked Arab, fair-skinned and wearing a light-striped kumbaz, had burst into the room and emptied a pistol into him at pointblank range. He had then run out, only to return immediately and fire several more shots at him before finally leaving. Moffatt, with no less than nine bullets in his chest and stomach, feeling that he might return yet again, had managed to stagger to the door and to turn the key in the lock before collapsing on the floor. Then, when I arrived, he had dragged himself up by the handle to let me in.

The Constable I had sent to find the doctor returned at that moment to inform me that he was out of town, and to tell me that he was sorry, but he had smashed up my car. (He had, too; my beautiful new car—he'd wrapped it neatly round a heavy electricity pylon ioo yards down the road.)

The Borders' Medical Officer arrived with the ambulance, and thankfully I handed over my patient to his skill and care. Actually, little could be done except to rush him to Haifa Hospital for operation. He was got off with the minimum of delay, the Army doctor accompanying him in the ambulance.

Colonel Lay arrived, having on receipt of my message put a cordon of troops round the entire town at the double from his headquarters. He brought with him two despatch riders, whom he sent off immediately to give Moffatt's description of his assailant to the personnel of the cordon.

Within three minutes one of the motor-cyclists, Corporal D. Weston, returned with an Arab riding on his pillion seat. On his way to warn the cordon he had seen this man walking through the trees parallel to the road and away from the town. He had noticed that he was a hunchback, and he had therefore called to him and brought him in. He gave his name as Ali Ahmed Mustapha, of Qabatiya village, and said that he had been in to Jenin in order, as the Arabs so aptly put it, to smell the air, and was just on his way home again. In addition to being a hunchback—not a very common deformity in that part of the world—he was unusually fair and was wearing a light-striped *kumbaz*, but he certainly had no firearms on him when he was searched. He was put in the yard of the lock-up pending further investigation, and we then set about questioning all those who might be able to tell us what had happened.

The two Arab sentries had heard the shooting above them, they said, and had run into one of the inner offices to tell the Arab Inspector on duty about it, leaving the main gate unguarded meanwhile. The Arab Inspector had drawn his pistol and (for what purpose we never discovered) had fired one shot into the roof of his office

On the upper floor of the building there were thirty-four Arabs; about a dozen were members of the public who had come to transact business of one kind or another at the various offices, and the remainder were all Government servants. Statements were taken from each of these people, staff and visitors alike, but not one of them would give us any help in any way, although quite a few of them must actually have seen the assailant at close quarters, and have been in a position to identify him.

I then decided to interview each one of these people personally and in private, giving each one exactly the same time, so that if any of them did wish to give us information they could do so without fear of subsequent reprisal. Two only of the thirty-four were prepared to talk, and neither of them was a Government servant. Both stated emphatically that the assassin was already in our custody, and both indicated the hunchback brought in by the despatch rider, although their attention had not been drawn to his presence nor had they seen him arrive. They had in fact seen him in the yard of the lock-up with some thirty other prisoners while they themselves had been waiting to be interviewed by me.

In view of the excitement which this incident caused in the town and the acute shortage of reliable policemen for guard duties, it was decided that the hunchback should be taken over by the Border Regiment, who would take him to their camp for the night and be responsible for his safe custody. The same night he asked his guards to take him to the lavatory; on the way he made a desperate attempt to escape from his escort into the darkness, and was promptly shot dead by a nearby sentry. In spite of everything which could be done for him, Moffatt also died the same evening in Haifa Hospital; by his death England lost a good and faithful servant and the Arab world a true friend.

Subsequent information which came in from various reliable sources left no doubt whatever that the hunchback brought in by Corporal Weston was in fact the assassin. It transpired that, after his narrow escape at Rummaneh, Abu Dorrah notified all his lieutenants that Moffatt was to be liquidated, and promised a substantial reward to anybody who could kill him. This matter was discussed at length at a meeting at Qabatiya village, but nobody was prepared to make the attempt, for the chances of success were very small.

Suddenly the hunchback (who, because of his deformity, had been ridiculed all his life by his more fortunate fellows) jumped up

and said: “Give me a gun. I will kill him for you!” Something in his manner—some glint in his eye, perhaps—stifled the coarse jests of his hearers before they were uttered, and after a moment’s hesitation the local gang leader handed over his own gun. There was nothing to show that Ali Ahmed Mustapha had any personal grudge against Moffatt, or indeed that he had any particular sympathy with the rebels. Everything pointed to the fact that he acted on the spur of the moment, seeing it as an opportunity—the first in his whole life—to gain the respect of his fellow villagers. The prospects of success were remote, but that would matter little; he had so little to lose, and even if he were killed in an unsuccessful attempt his name and the story of his heroism would be handed down in his village from generation to generation. As it happened, Fate led him on, providing rare opportunities for the actual shooting and for his escape from the building and then, through the combination of a far-sighted and quick-thinking battalion commander and intelligent observation and initiative on the part of a despatch rider, delivered him on to the pillion of Corporal Weston’s motor-cycle.

* * *

Abu Dorrah’s revenge on the *mukhtar* of Rummaneh village, whom he blamed for his narrow escape from capture on the occasion of the interrupted dinner party, was not to be long delayed.

He arrived with his gang at Rummaneh in the middle of one moonlit night, called out the *mukhtar* and shot him dead in the presence of his mother, brothers and sisters; he then watched his gang set light to the house before riding off into the hills.

The dead man’s family and friends managed to put out the fire and save most of the house from destruction, after which they sent a messenger into Jenin to report the murder to the police. We went

immediately to the scene, and recorded statements from the witnesses. No doctor was available, nor could one be obtained who would be able to perform the postmortem examination. At that time corpses were everyday occurrences, and little could be done in the way of a thorough investigation by my very small staff, nor, owing to the dearth of magistrates, could inquests be held. I therefore made an examination of the *mukhtar's* body myself, noting the number and location of the bullet holes, and satisfying myself that he was in fact dead. This done, I gave permission for the body to be buried.

The relatives of the dead *mukhtar* were thoroughly incensed at the cold-blooded murder of their leader, and were now prepared to do everything in their power to bring about the downfall of his murderer—everything, that is, short of declaring their intention openly, for to do so would result in an early return visit of the gang and the wiping out of the whole family, man, woman and child. The question was how to make the best use of their desire to co-operate with the authorities. Abu Dorrah was still in the area, but his visits to villages were now short and unannounced, so that it was not possible, once he was known by the Rummaneh people to be in a neighbouring village, to get a message through to us quickly enough for us to be able to take action with any hope of success.

We discussed the matter from all angles, and finally Colonel Lay hit on the idea of installing a battery-operated wireless transmitter in the Rummaneh house which could be used by the family to send us information. The set was of simple construction and virtually foolproof; it had only an on/off switch and a Morse key to be worked by the operator, and it was tuned to a fixed wavelength.

We drew up a list of ten villages in the area which were most likely to be honoured by a visit from Abu Dorrah and numbered them from one to ten. Selected members of the family were then shown how to switch on the set and transmit suitable groups of dashes of the appropriate number. Thus, if the village was No. 7 on

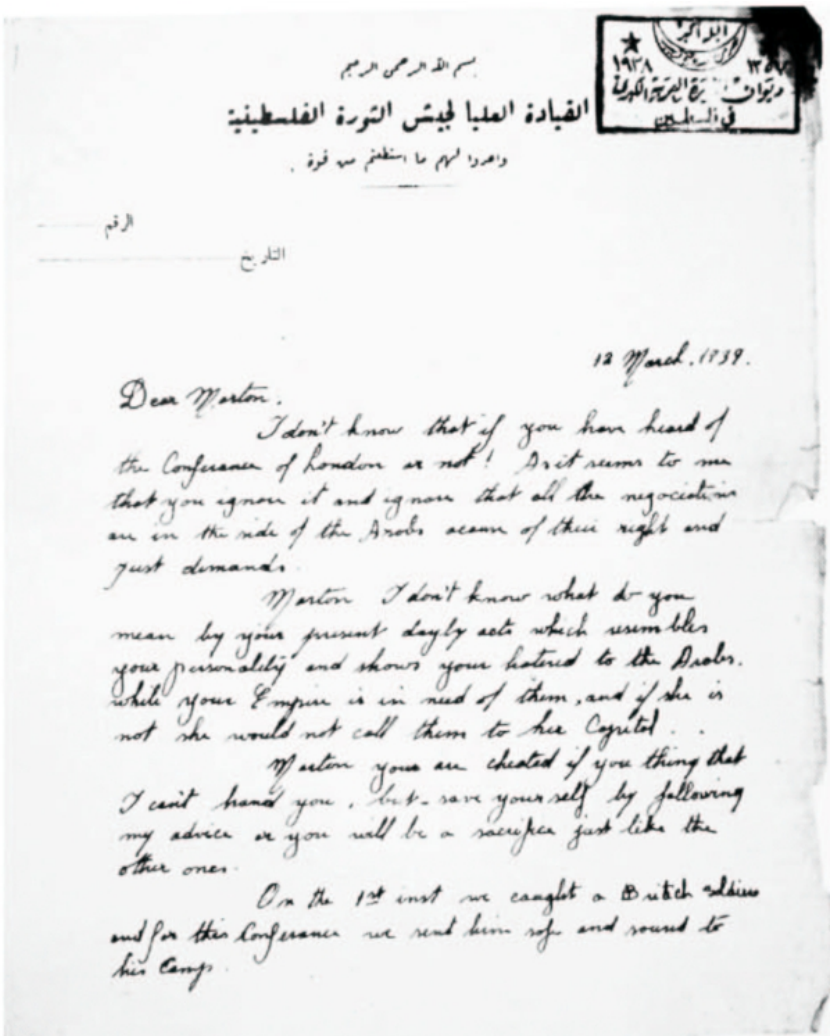
the list the signaller on duty at the Army camp, where a permanent watch was being maintained on this wavelength, would hear seven dashes, pause, seven dashes, pause, seven dashes, and so on, for as long as possible.

The whole idea proved most effective, and Abu Dorrah must have been in despair to know how we were able to get on his track so quickly and so frequently. We did not succeed in catching him by this method, for as always the time factor and the difficulty of getting an efficient cordon round a village without being seen proved too much for us, but we did have some very near misses, and we must have made our quarry's life thoroughly uncomfortable. No longer could he roam at will through the countryside, evading with ease the clumsy efforts of the police and military to capture him. Now he never knew where he was safe, for no sooner did he enter a village than his scouts would give warning of our approach, and he would have to run for his life. Only once did he visit Rummaneh during this period, but on this occasion we got no information of his presence because he himself was sitting on the divan in which our transmitter was concealed!

* * *

There was frequently friction between the minor gang leaders who were constantly jockeying for favour with the Commander-in-Chief and for increased powers he could confer. This rivalry sometimes developed into actual fighting, and we lost no opportunity to play off one side against the other. One dark night, for instance, a party of police and military crept up to the outskirts of a village which was known to be expecting an attack from a rival gang and opened fire with captured rebel rifles and ammunition (which, incidentally, had a sound quite distinct from that of the weapons used by the forces of law and order). In no time at all the village gang had got out its own firearms and directed heavy fire on our positions. We waited a few minutes to allow them all to get into

action and then opened up with mortars, Lewis guns and our own rifles, inflicting several casualties on our opponents. All resistance ceased immediately, of course, and when we entered the village a few minutes later we were able to recover a number of rifles which had been discarded in panic. It must be remembered that at this period all cases connected with the disturbances were triable by the Military Courts, and that death was the penalty for possession of firearms or ammunition without a licence.



القيادة العليا لجيش الثورة الفلسطينية

الرقم

التاريخ

12 March. 1939.

Dear Morton.

I don't know that if you have heard of the Conferance of London or not! But seems to me that you ignore it and ignore that all the negociations are in the side of the Arabs ocasion of their right and just demands.

Morton I don't know what do you mean by your present dayly acts which resemble your personality and shows your hatered to the Arabs. While your Empire is in need of them, and if she is not she would not call them to her Capital.

Morton you are cheated if you thing that I can't hand you, but save your self by following my advice or you will be a sacrifice just like the other ones.

On the 1st inst we caught a British soldier and for this Conferance we send him safe and sound to his Camp.

An offer from the rebel Commander (Page 1 of 2)

القيادة العليا لجيش الثورة الفلسطينية

الرقم

التاريخ

Sincerely Yours
General of the Holy Revolution
Yousef Said Abou
Doura.

An offer from the rebel Commander (Page 2 of 2)

About this time one of the night ambushes manned by the Border Regiment met with success. A member of Abu Dorrah's gang incurred his leader's displeasure to such an extent that he sentenced him to death, and directed four of his most trusted men to escort him across the plain to the boundary of the Jewish district of Affule and there shoot him. Presumably this site was chosen for the execution in the hope that we would blame the Jews for it. The four executioners were mounted on horseback and Said ez-Zreikeh, their victim, was made to walk between them, with the end of the rope which tied his hands behind his back held by one of the escort.

They rode right into the middle of our ambush, and on being challenged by the soldiers scattered in all directions, leaving the condemned man standing by himself in the middle of the track. The troops opened fire immediately, but in the confusion the horsemen made good their escape. The prisoner was brought straight back to Jenin, where I spent most of the night talking to him. Understandably, perhaps, it needed but little persuasion to get him to work for us against his former leader, and he was able to provide much useful information about the recent activities of the gang and the identity of its members, all of which was carefully recorded and tabulated.

Part of our campaign for regaining the initiative consisted of a series of village checks. About four times a week a cordon of troops would be placed around a selected village during the hours of darkness. At first light another party of police and troops would move in and all the villagers would be assembled at a suitable place, which was usually the threshing floor. When this was completed, all houses, stores, barns and other buildings would be searched for firearms and other incriminating articles, while at the same time the identity cards and *bona fides* of the males who had been rounded up were being checked. This procedure certainly had some deterrent value, for any wanted man or well-known gangster who took a chance and slept in a village knew that he might find himself caught up in a cordon at dawn. On the other hand, without some definite information as to the identity of the members of the village gang and of their firearms on which to act, these operations frequently bore no obvious fruit. We did pick up the odd firearm, but this occurred as a general rule in circumstances which made it impossible for us to identify and prosecute the owner.

Said ez-Zreikeh and several other similar informers whom we had now collected proved of very great value on these village checks. One or more of them would be concealed in an armoured car close to the spot where the assembled villagers were being interrogated, and would indicate by prearranged signals whenever

we came to a gangster or any other person whom they considered to be “agin the Government”. Persons so indicated were kept on one side for further investigation, and if our informers were able to give a reasonable account of a suspect’s activities we could apply for a detention warrant for a period up to one year under the Emergency Regulations which were then in force. This did not constitute a prison sentence, but solely a means for putting out of circulation gangsters against whom we had insufficient evidence on which to bring a criminal charge. Persons so detained were held in special camps, were allowed to wear their own clothes, receive visitors and food parcels, and were not required to do any labour. Their cases were subject to frequent review, and whenever it was felt that any of them could be released without adversely affecting the state of security in the area from which they came, they were allowed to go. Undoubtedly there were occasions on which our informers took advantage of this system to secure the incarceration of some of their personal enemies, but on the whole it worked well, for as far as possible we checked and cross-checked the evidence against each man. I believe that we in Jenin were the first to devise this method of screening, but it was soon copied in the rest of Palestine, and has since been widely used in Malaya, Kenya and other parts of the world.

Soon after Said ez-Zreikeh had been rescued, I happened to pick up a man on the outskirts of Rummaneh village whom I suspected of being a gangster. He was dressed in semi-uniform and was of Syrian origin. He could give no satisfactory account of his presence in the area, and I therefore had him taken to the Jenin lock-up for further investigation. There he was by chance seen by Said, who promptly identified him as one of the party which had been taking him to his execution. Further evidence as to his activities was soon forthcoming, and in due course he was tried by a Military Court in Haifa and sentenced to death. When, in the course of my duty, I went to witness his execution in Acre Prison he assured me that he had been wrongly identified and that he had taken no part in what was to have been Said’s last journey, but he had, he said, taken part

in many raids on Jewish colonies as a member of Abu Dorrah's gang, and had also carried out a number of assassinations on his behalf. He had no regret and went to his end quite cheerfully—a striking example, surely, of the fatalism of the East.

Said ez-Zreikeh had been the principal witness against this Syrian. He had given his evidence firmly and convincingly, and the defence had failed to shake him. When the case was completed and the death sentence passed he insisted on remaining in Haifa for a few days, and nothing I could say or do, short of using force, could get him to come back to Jenin with me. In vain did I point out the risk he was taking—like most mercenary informers, he suffered from an over-weening conceit and an immutable belief in his ability to take care of himself. He was by this time firmly convinced that he was practically bullet-proof, and that his earlier escape from death was due to his own wit and initiative rather than to the presence of the Border ambush.

I had already provided him with a pistol for his own defence, and there appeared to be little more I could do but let him take his chance; he promised me faithfully that he would return to Jenin within a week.

I could not at that time understand how people who were in danger of assassination could derive any sense of security from having a pistol in their pocket or on their belt.

In Hollywood gangster films the assassins appear to follow some unwritten code of chivalry—if it can qualify for such a description —which requires that they should first talk to their intended victims, thus giving them a chance to distract their attention and disarm them with a well-directed kick.

Those I have met have always been the kind to creep up behind you and shoot you in the back, so that the first intimation you get of your impending demise is the shock of the bullet entering your guts.

Said's pistol did him no good; he was still wearing it when he was carried into the mortuary. He'd never had a chance even to unfasten the strap on the holster. And his holiday in Haifa had lasted precisely two days.

Chapter 11

CAPTURE OF A GANG LEADER

On my way into Haifa from Jenin to give evidence at the Military Court trial of the Syrian to whom I have referred in the previous chapter, I happened to notice two Arab horsemen riding across the plain about 200 yards from the road, which they had apparently just crossed. I was in my own car, which I normally drove myself, but on this occasion my Arab orderly was driving, while Sergeant Pullman and I sat at the back.

I stopped the car, got out, and called to the two horsemen to come to me, putting a warning shot from a rifle across their bows as I did so; after a moment's hesitation they returned to the road. One of them was a distinguished-looking man in the fifties, very well dressed in silken robes and riding boots of exquisite quality, and with a richly decorated saddle on his fine Arab mare. The other, by his dress and demeanour, appeared to be his servant.

I asked the well-dressed Arab his name and business, and he gave me a name which conveyed nothing to me, and said he was from a village in the Gaza district, of which I had never heard. He was passing through Jenin district, he said, en route to Nazareth to visit some relatives. His story might well have been true, for they carried no firearms and seemed to be completely at their ease. However, I could afford to take no chances and, as I was in a hurry to get to the court, where I was to be the first witness, I invited him to accompany me to Haifa, leaving his horse in the care of his servant.

During the rest of the journey we talked together at length, but while I did not succeed in snaking his story in the slightest, I did

find him to be a most cultured and agreeable companion. When I had cause to berate my Arab driver for carelessly knocking down a donkey which ran across the road, injuring it so badly that I had to shoot it, and inflicting further damage on my luckless car, my unknown horseman intervened most tactfully on his behalf, begged me not to be too hard on him, and offered to pay the owner for the value of the animal— a payment which, of course, I made from my own pocket.

By the time we arrived in Haifa I was convinced that my companion was somebody of importance—somebody, in fact, I ought to know—and I was determined to discover his true identity as soon as possible. Making effort, therefore, to match his own good manners, I politely invited him to rest awhile in the lock-up at the Central Police Station until my case was finished, when I would be honoured to take him back to Jenin with me, assuring him at the same time that I should look forward all day to the pleasure of his companionship to relieve the monotony of the journey home. He gave me a rueful look, but accepted his incarceration in good grace, and I rushed off to the Military Court to give my evidence.

As I left the witness-box I was handed a frantic message from one of the senior police officers in Haifa. What was I doing, he wanted to know, putting Yousef Hamdan, Abu Dorrah's second-in-command, in his lock-up without telling anybody ? So that was it—Yousef Hamdan! I had heard a lot about him, of course, including Moffatt's description of him as the cleverest rebel leader in the whole of Palestine. Apparently somebody had recognised him as he went from my car to the lock-up, and the whole of Haifa was seething with excitement at the news of his capture. Reports from several sources stated that plans were already afoot to attack the Central Police Station to try to rescue him.

The Haifa police were only too glad to lend me a couple of armoured cars and some men, and I took him back to Jenin with me under strong escort. There I was able to obtain ample evidence on

which to place him before a Military Court on a capital charge. Having formally charged him myself, I escorted him to the Central Prison at Acre to await his trial. This prison, by the way, is virtually impregnable, for it is housed in the actual castle built by the Crusaders, surrounded by the sea on three sides and by a deep moat on the fourth.

A few days later I received a curt notification that my prisoner, Yousef Hamdan, had escaped from a military escort on the road between Haifa and Acre. I was completely flabbergasted at this news. In the first place, the military had no business with him—he was a Jenin prisoner, captured by the police, and awaiting trial for capital offences committed in Jenin, with which he had been duly charged; in the second place, if it had been necessary to take him to Haifa it would have been an elementary precaution to provide an adequate and responsible escort for the purpose.

I went charging into Haifa, determined to get to the bottom of the matter, but all my enquiries in both police and military circles met with a complete blank wall. What few facts I could gather about the circumstances of the escape differed materially with each telling, and it was soon clear that the whole story was a complete fabrication.

I had a strong suspicion that the “escape” had been engineered to cover a plan to try to use him as an informer and possibly as a guide to lead to the capture of Abu Dorrah. I knew enough of Yousef Hamdan from my talks with him (in which I had delicately explored such a possibility) to be sure that he would willingly die rather than betray his comrades.

I expressed this view to the authorities in Haifa as forcibly as I was able, but without avail.

The huge pipe-line of the Iraq Petroleum Company, which runs from the Iraq oilfields right through the desert, the Jordan Valley, the Plain of Armageddon and on to the refinery at the terminal site

in Acre Bay, was a popular target for rebel activity. Practically every night during this period it would be punctured by rifle fire, frequently at many different places, and the escaping oil would be set on fire. The nuisance value of these attacks, and indeed the cost entailed by the delay and the ensuing repairs, were considerable, but because of the distance involved—about sixty miles of pipe in Palestine—it was impossible to devise a system of guarding it which would not have swallowed up far too much of our available manpower.

A Captain in the Royal Artillery had achieved some success in leading patrols of Jewish supernumerary police on foot along the pipe-line, carrying out ambushes at likely spots en route. This Captain visited Jenin on several occasions, and was always anxious to know as much as possible about our methods and sources of information. I had many long conversations with him and gave him all the help I could.

His name was Orde Wingate.

Yousef Hamdah was handed over to Wingate, and we in Jenin were told that a special party would be operating in our northern area for a time and that we were to lay off. Although we were not informed officially of the results of these special operations, I was able to build up a pretty accurate picture of them from the reports I received from my contacts in the area. The inevitable happened—the party chased round each night for weeks on end, setting ambushes at spots indicated by Yousef, but on only one occasion did they get near a gang of rebels. The party was in ambush when they heard sounds of people approaching. Yousef, according to my informers, called out something in Arabic, which none of the troops understood, and the band (which was in fact led by Abu Dorrah in person) melted into the night. When this report was passed on to the military in Haifa it was stoutly denied that Yousef had failed them; nevertheless, he was not used again, but was taken in secret to a rural police station— not in the Jenin area—from which he

actually did escape. With much-enhanced prestige and a good insight into the military operational methods, he returned to his old haunts on the Jenin/Haifa borders and rebel activity in the area was immediately intensified.

A reward of £200 was eventually offered for information leading to his capture dead or alive: after I had gone on leave in the summer of 1939 he was killed in an engagement with police and troops from Jenin, the reward being duly paid out to the person who had given information of the presence of the gang. I had captured him free of charge!

Actually I found later that the "escape" was organised for Wingate by the Brigade Commander in Haifa, Brigadier Jack Evetts; it was an excellent scheme in many ways, and it failed only because of the sterling character of Yousef Hamdan himself.

Abu Dorrah, meanwhile, had been finding life in Jenin too hot to be comfortable, and was spending increasingly long periods in Syria. On his way back to Palestine after a spell in Damascus he was captured by a patrol of the Transjordan Frontier Force, and was later handed over to the Palestine Government. In 1940 he stood his trial before the Court of Criminal Assize, with the Chief Justice presiding, for the murder of the *mukhtar* of Rummaneh.

In addition to the routine evidence of my investigations at Rummaneh village on the morning after the murder, I had also to give the medical evidence of the cause of death and describe in detail the nature and location of the wounds in the body—a most unusual task for a policeman, surely, and I was thankful that I had examined the body so closely and made detailed notes, although at the time there had seemed not the slightest prospect of bringing the perpetrators to justice. My medical evidence was accepted by the Court, and in due course Sheikh Yousef Said abu Dorrah, self-styled Commander-in-Chief of the Holy Arab Revolutionary Army, was sentenced to pay the full penalty for this one of his many brutal crimes.

In due course I received a written order to attend his execution, which was scheduled to take place at the Jerusalem Central Prison on Tuesday, February 18th, at 8 a.m. Let me say here and now that this is a duty which no police officer enjoys; the law requires that an officer who knows the condemned man well and was present when he was sentenced to death shall be present at the execution in order to identify him to the magistrate and the executioner, so that there can be no possible chance of the wrong man being hanged: there is no question of going there to gloat over the last moments of a vanquished foe.

At one minute to eight on the appointed morning I followed the executioner and the Jerusalem District Commissioner, who was present in his capacity of magistrate, into the condemned cell. As the District Commissioner turned to me to ask me to identify him Abu Dorrah grasped my hand warmly in both of his and gave the Arab blessing: *"Es-salaam aleikum, Morton Effendi!"* to which I made the traditional reply: *"Wa aleikum es-salaam, ya Sheikh!"* In a trice his hands were pinioned behind his back and, with smile on face, head erect and firm tread, he went to his death.

In the few short years of his reign of power he had been a ruthless killer, but he died like a man.

ديوان سجل البرقية الواردة
في السلطة
١٩٣٨ ٣٤٧

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

القيادة العليا لجيش الثورة الفلسطينية

وأعدوا لهم ما استطعتم من قوة .

الرقم

التاريخ

12 March. 1939.

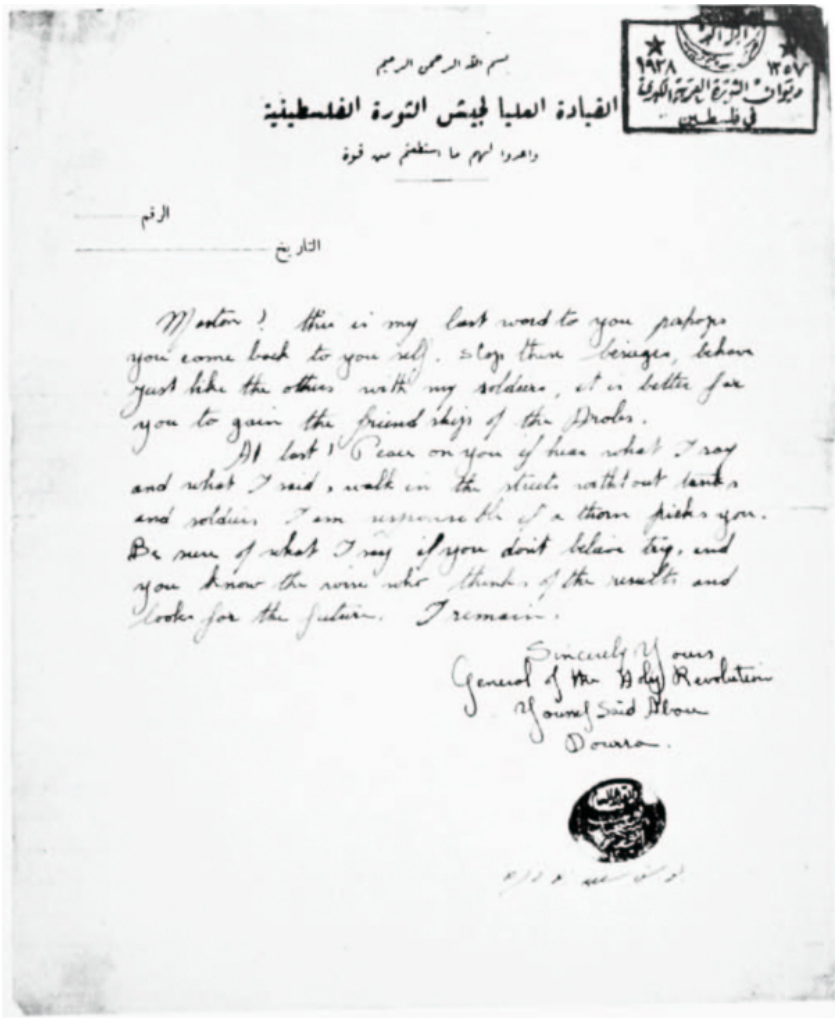
Dear Morton.

I don't know that if you have heard of the Conferance of London or not! But it seems to me that you ignore it and ignore that all the negociations are on the side of the Arabs ocasion of their right and just demands.

Morton I don't know what do you mean by your present daily acts which resembles your personality and shows your hatered to the Arabs. While your Empire is in need of them, and if she is not she would not call them to her Capital.

Morton you are cheated if you thing that I can't hand you, but save your self by following my advice or you will be a sacrifice just like the other ones.

On the 1st inst we caught a British soldier and for the Conferance we sent him safe and sound to his Camp.



بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

القيادة العليا لجيش الثورة الفلسطينية

وأعدوا لهم ما استطعتم من قوة

الرقم

التاريخ

Mr. Colon ! this is my last word to you perhaps you come back to your self. Stop this besieges, behave just like the others with my soldiers, it is better for you to gain the friendship of the Arabs.

At last I leave on you of hear what I say and what I said, walk in the streets without tanks and soldiers I am responsible of a thorn pricks you. Be sure of what I say if you don't believe big, and you know the worse who thinks of the results and looks for the future. I remain.

Sincerely Yours
General of the Holy Revolution
Youssef Said Abou
Douara.

An offer from the rebel Commander

Chapter 12

DEATH OF A DRIVER

Life in Jenin was not always as sordid as might appear from the previous chapters, for we managed to intersperse a good deal of fun between the more serious tasks which were our lot.

With the big increase in the size of the Force at the end of 1938 my modest strength of British police increased to more than sixty; in consequence, we were able to take a more active part in operations and also, when circumstances permitted, to take on the troops at soccer, hockey and other sports.

As a change from the rigours of life in a rural area, I tried to arrange for parties of men to go into Haifa for a swim, a decent meal and a cinema show at least once a week.

Early in 1939 we were able to arrange for a mobile film unit to visit Jenin every week, and these shows, held in the yard of the lock-up, were to become the social event of the week for us.

At first they were confined to members of the police, invited guests and, of necessity, the actual occupants of the cells in the lock-up. They aroused a great deal of interest, too, among the Arab children of the town, who swarmed round the entrance to the Police Station trying to catch a glimpse of the proceedings through chinks in the closed double doors. To these youngsters the cinema was a complete novelty, for Jenin had never seen one before.

On the spur of the moment one evening I took a couple of these youngsters into the show with me, and such was their ecstasy and wonderment that I realised that I had a powerful propaganda weapon in my hands.

Because of the increased efficiency of our intelligence network, we had by this time established a measure of law and order in the township itself. I therefore let it be known that, providing there had been no act of violence or lawlessness in the town during the previous week, children would be allowed in to the cinema on payment of 5 mils (1*d.*). This was an instant success, and an excited but well-behaved mass of children, some of whom appeared to be in dire need of a shave, assembled outside the Police Station hours before the scheduled starting time. By modern standards, I suppose, it was reprehensible to allow these juveniles to observe at first hand the inside of a prison yard, with the prisoners' arms hanging through the bars as they craned their necks to get a good view but it must be remembered that a prison sentence in those days brought prestige rather than disgrace to the prisoner.

There was, of course, the possibility that members of the audience might be used to try to smuggle in weapons or messages to the inmates, but the British police who occupied the benches at the rear of the courtyard kept a pretty sharp eye on them.

Impression of the cinema in Jenin lock-up

Impression of the cinema in Jenin lock-up

Up on the balcony above, in addition to most of the inspectors and sergeants, we entertained officers and N.C.Os. from the military and, after some hesitation and a little persuasion, the Mayor of Jenin and one or two of the notables.

There has been much talk in recent years of the novelty of 3D, but I actually saw my first 3D film in Jenin in 1936— and we were all issued with red-and-green spectacles for the purpose. The breath-

taking downhill plunge on the great dipper and the lion which appeared to leap right out at us from the screen not only had the children squealing with excitement, but caused quite a few tough policemen to hang on to their seats.

Once only was it necessary, because of a shooting incident which had occurred one night, to deny the children their weekly cinema; there is no doubt in my mind that as a result considerable pressure was exerted by them on their parents to keep the town quiet.

I knew, too, that the majority of the townspeople were heartily sick of the existing state of unrest and of the irksome restrictions which were imposed on them as a result, but because any public expression of their true feelings might well result in sudden death nobody was particularly keen to give a lead. They were, not unnaturally, terrified of the gangsters in the hills and desperately anxious that nothing should happen in the town to bring retribution on their own heads, either from the gangs or from the side of Government.

Eventually, however, a simple procedure developed whereby we could tell whether anything of importance was afoot, or whether any terrorists were in the town on mischief bent.

One Saturday morning, in preparation for a game against the Army the next afternoon, I took my football boots to the local cobbler to have some studs fixed, remarking that I would collect them at noon on Sunday. As I walked towards the shop the next morning with my usual escort, Constables Sam Eager and Brian Allen, we observed that all the merchants in the street were hurriedly putting up their shutters and closing their shops—a most unusual happening for the middle of a Sunday morning. There was a marked atmosphere of tension, and the usual noisy bartering was stilled.

Instead of continuing with my original intention of collecting my

boots, I turned and went back to the Police Station to send out scouts to discover what was going on.

I very soon learned that two would-be assassins had been lying in wait for us near the cobbler's shop; if we had not turned back we should most certainly have walked into their ambush and been killed, in spite of the guns we all carried in our hands when out in the town.

Although I was sure that the indirect warning I had received on that occasion had been involuntary, I let it be known in the town that I believed it to be a deliberate tip-off, that I was duly appreciative of it, and that I would keep an eye open for similar signals in future.

That week admission to the cinema was free.

Subsequently we kept a sharp eye on the shops and shopkeepers, and a very useful barometer they turned out to be, giving us warning on more than one occasion of a threatening storm.

Within three days I knew the identity of our two thwarted visitors, and in less than a week I led a combined police and military patrol to a house they frequented in Qabatiya village. They were both there, armed, and they were both killed in the ensuing gun fight.

* * *

The death of Cairns and Barker, and more intimately those of Wally Medler and Moffatt, had brought home to me very forcibly the fact that, in common with many other members of the Force, I was leading a Life of some danger and that, if I were to stay alive for any length of time, it would be as well to formulate some sort of policy to enable me to do so. Obviously a certain amount of danger was inevitable—the job could not be done without it—but I

determined that I would not, if I could help it, take risks which were either unnecessary or unjustified.

During my time in Jenin I was under fire several times a week and sometimes even several times a day, but Arab marksmanship was not very accurate, so the odds against being hit were pretty long. I don't suppose I ever stopped to consider seriously the possible wounds one might receive if one of the dumdum bullets which were flying around were to find its mark—had I done so, I should probably have resigned and gone home long before.

That, I felt, was a risk which could not be classed as avoidable—it was part of the game. But when, during the course of one of our nightly road patrols, our open-topped armoured car was blown up by a land-mine buried in the road and the front half of the Lewis gun I was actually holding at the moment of the explosion was ripped right off and thrown 30 yards away, I castigated myself for my carelessness. We had been fired upon from the hills and had stopped to give battle, turning off the lights as we halted. When the rebel shooting eventually petered out, I told the driver, Constable Pittock, to drive on. He started up, moved off, switching on his lights after he had driven some 10 yards. I was covering the hillside with the Lewis gun in case the sound of our engine starting drew further fire; as the lights came on I glanced to my right to get a quick look at the road ahead. To my horror I saw stretched across the road the trip-wire of a land-mine disappearing from view under the moving car. I just had time to shout "Look out!" when up we went. Fortunately, Dennis Toulson, who was the only other member of the crew, did not take me literally, or he would have had his head blown off too. The car was virtually a write-off, and we had to wait out there for the rest of the night until we could be towed back to Jenin.

Thanks to Bill Barker's foresight and imagination in designing these armoured cars, none of us was injured, but this did not alter the fact that I felt myself guilty of negligence in not seeing the trip-

wire in time to stop. I had exposed my men and myself to unnecessary risks by my own carelessness, and this made me more than ever determined to keep in future to my policy of reasonable caution.

Many brave men were killed during these years; many of them had no chance at all, but some died because they were caught off their guard perhaps, or because they took risks which were not absolutely necessary in the execution of their duty.

I think that this policy of mine stood me in good stead for the rest of my service and was responsible, together with the devotion to duty of the fine men who acted as my bodyguard from time to time and a very large slice of luck, for the fact that I did not share the fate of many better men than I in Palestine.

Only on one occasion throughout my service did I lose one of my men while I was actually present, and that happened while I was stationed in Jenin. The circumstances leading up to this incident, and indeed the incident itself, served to strengthen my belief in the correctness of my code of action in emergency.

The Rugby XV of the Samaria District, made up of the best players from Nablus, Tulkarm and Jenin, was scheduled to play a needle match in the Saunders Shield Tournament in Jerusalem against the Depot. The match was due to finish in ample time for me to get back to Jenin by nightfall, and I therefore decided to take my own car to Jerusalem in convoy with an armoured car which would take the Jenin members of the team. With me in my car were my faithful shadow and watchdog, Sam Eager, and Captain Tony Box, the R.A.M.C. doctor attached to the Border Regiment, who was coming along to watch the game.

On our way through Nablus I stopped to pay my respects to the Superintendent of Police there, who was my immediate chief. He asked me to come back after the match as far as Nablus in convoy with two more armoured cars which were taking in the rest of the

team. This rather upset my plan to leave immediately after the match, but I saw no reason why our departure should be long delayed.

Unfortunately, the match was very late starting; then the Nablus members of the team got into the canteen and in consequence by the time we got away dusk was only half an hour off.

Twenty-nine kilometres north of Jerusalem the road descends through a series of sharp bends into the notorious, aptly-named Wadi Haramiyeh, the Valley of Thieves. As we reached the top of the first bend before starting the descent we were fired on from the hills in front of us and the convoy came to a halt. The Jenin armoured car was in the lead, followed by my own saloon car and then the two armoured cars from Nablus and Tulkarm. There appeared to be about a score of riflemen firing at us; I noted that they were actually level with us and that if they had had the sense to hold their fire until we had gone down into the beginning of the Wadi, they would have been able to direct their fire down into the open-topped armoured cars and, incidentally, would have had a very inviting target in the shape of my own unprotected car. As I peered down into the gloom below us, I could see a very effective road-block of stones across the road which could only be man-handled out of the way to let the convoy through.

Each of our three armoured cars had a Lewis gun and about 800 rounds of ammunition in sixteen pans; in addition, we had a dozen or more rifles and ample ammunition for them. My own Lewis gun opened up very quickly and, as far as I could see, accurately from the leading armoured car, but all that came from the cars behind was a good deal of bad language, which did not seem to me to be likely to be much of a deterrent to our attackers.

From the point of vantage I had taken up in the lee of the leading vehicle when the convoy halted I doubled back past my own now empty car to the armoured car behind. The senior officer there was having some difficulty in getting his Lewis gun crew into

action, and seemed anxious to press on. I pointed out that we were perfectly safe where we were, and that it would be foolhardy to drive down into the ambush and expose ourselves to considerable danger in removing the road-block, when we could, if necessary, stay where we were all night, or until our attackers ran out of ammunition.

I got the second Lewis gun firing and went back to investigate the position in the last armoured car. The gun here had a bad stoppage which required the changing of a small spring, and took some time to clear. We had got it in working order, and as we lifted it to its mounting on the front of the car I saw, to my dismay, the leading armoured car followed by my own car being driven without lights slowly down the hill to the road-block below. Someone had presumably concluded that my handling of the situation was wrong and had decided —very effectively—to force my hand. I could see a shadowy figure jump from the armoured car and tear at the road-block with his hands. With Tony Box and Sam Eager, I doubled down after them, shouting to the other two drivers to follow with their vehicles. This was no time for argument or recrimination, so I went to help remove the road-block, silently hoping that there were no booby traps in it. As we ran past the leading armoured car, however, a constable called out to me that the driver, Paddy Dowling, had been wounded. Tony Box and I quickly entered the armoured car, to find him lying unconscious with a bullet wound in his chest.

Tony gave him a brief examination and said: “Can’t do anything here. Our only hope is to get him to hospital without delay.” We had no spare driver, but Sergeant Hawley, Force heavyweight boxing champion, said he “thought he could drive”.

“It’s all yours,” I told him. “But for God’s sake be careful!” — and, with bullets spattering round us, we lifted the injured man from the armoured car into the back seat of my own car. Sergeant Scott had by now cleared enough space in the road-block for me to

get through, so with Sam Eager sitting beside me and Tony doing what he could for Paddy, we set off for Nablus and the nearest hospital.

Wadi Haramiyeh extends for about twelve kilometres, winding curves and horseshoe bends between steep hills all the way. What a nightmare drive that was—certainly the worst I have ever experienced.

Every gangster in the district seemed to be in action that night, for we were fired on almost at every bend, sometimes at nearly point-blank range. If I turned the lights on I could get up speed, but this pinpointed the target for the snipers; if I drove without lights I had to slow down or else go off the road to certain death on one of the bends. I found myself wondering what would happen if we came to another roadblock—we had one rifle, my pistol and a handful of cartridges between us. We came round the corner of a hill, and there in front of us was the other road-block—and there, in the road, were the men making it. They scattered as our tyres screeched on the tarmac, and we managed to get through the gap which they had not yet closed. We were fired on almost continuously —from the hills, from the slopes—even from the ditches beside the road.

All this time the doctor was gently doing what he could to help his patient, while Sam Eager, sitting beside me, talked as calmly as though we were out for a spin, observing and commenting upon items of interest by the roadside. Apart from my momentary speculation about a possible road-block, I had no time to think of anything but the job of driving. Tony and Sam could do nothing but sit and hope that I should not lose control and break their necks for them. I should not have liked to be in their shoes that night.

The Wadi ends at Kilo 41, where there was a military outpost. The troops had heard the shooting and were turning out to investigate when we came tearing up from the darkness and in through the gates which swung open to receive us. Paddy was lifted

out with the utmost care and put on the bed in the first-aid tent; Tony bent to examine him, feeling his pulse and lifting his eyelid. But nothing could be done. He was already dead.

Chapter 13

REGAINING THE INITIATIVE

Meanwhile, in Jenin itself we continued to increase our grip on the situation; with ample troops and police now at our disposal, we were able to take the initiative with good effect, and my growing band of informers, all of whom were ex-gangsters, were of great value to us.

In February, 1939, for instance, a convoy of police and troops returning in trucks from an operation at the eastern side of our district stopped to rest on a hillside opposite Sanur village.

As a hillside it looked exactly the same as any other, but one of my stooges (who answered to the pseudonym of Albert) said that he remembered from his childhood that this particular hill had some shallow caves in it which might be worth looking at. He was very vague as to their exact location, but we organised a search and eventually found them. They had been carefully filled in and camouflaged; buried inside them we found, among many other items of rebel equipment, 7,600 rounds of ammunition and 400 sticks of gelignite. There was also a dentist's outfit, complete with forceps, drills, hypodermics and ampoules of cocaine. I often wondered whether there was a qualified dentist among the gangs, or whether perhaps in extremis they used to extract each other's aching molars.

"Albert" and another Police Agent

On March 26th we received information that Abdul Rahim el Haj Mohammed, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Arab Revolutionary Army, was to pass through our area that night and would stay in either Sanur or another village some distance away.

There was nothing unusual about information of this sort, for it was coming in all the time from all sorts of sources about all kinds

of rebel activity. No information was dismissed lightly; every bit was carefully considered, and whenever possible acted upon. In 99 per cent, of the cases it proved false, or late, or inaccurate, but 1 per cent, of it turned out to be correct, and that made all our other abortive efforts worth while. Experience showed that the most unlikely information was probably true, and that that which rang true nearly always turned out to be completely false. In consequence, one got to the stage where one believed that the most unlikely information was probably true, whereupon, of course, it ceased to be most unlikely and rang true. Therefore, as it rang true, it would almost certainly turn out to be false, so the whole thing became most confusing—a conclusion to which the reader will doubtless subscribe.

The only safe way, in fact, to find out whether information was correct or not was to act on it, and this we did at every conceivable opportunity. Our willingness to act on all information (and pay for it) meant that we received a vast amount of it—far more than we should have done had we been by repute unco-operative in this respect.

We knew that Abdul Rahim frequently passed through our district, but we did not know until it was too late at which of the many possible villages he would stay.

On this occasion it was arranged that a combined party of police and military under Colonel Duncan Dunn should go to Sanur, while I went with a similar party to the other likely village (which I felt sure to be the right one).

I guessed wrong. Colonel Dunn put his cordon around the village without the occupants so much as guessing at their presence. Just before dawn the troops moved in and occupied points of vantage on the outskirts of the village while the police rounded up the villagers on the threshing floor. Two soldiers with a Bren gun posted on a roof to the south of the village saw three men crossing the valley toward the hill on which we had found the rebel

ammunition a month earlier; when their repeated instructions to halt were ignored, they opened fire with a short burst at a range of some 300 yards. Two of the men dropped, but the third, taking effective evasive action, made good his escape.

Colonel Dunn, attracted by the firing, heard the report of the soldiers and went to investigate the two men with a section of troops and one of our agents. Both men were dead, shot through the heart. Both were wearing Luger pistols at their belts and a rifle lay beside one of them. They were identified by the informer as the Commander-in-Chief himself and one of his lieutenants. This was news indeed; it was soon flashed to Jerusalem and before long every Arab shop in Palestine was closed and shuttered as a mark of mourning for the dead leader. The news was radioed also to the village where I had spent a cold and fruitless night lying out in the open; I came in to Sanur to see the dead leader and to congratulate Colonel Dunn on the success of his operation.

Nothing succeeds like success, of course, and we in Jenin now found ourselves being written up, not only in the local Press, but also in the home papers. We had visits from Viscount Gort, then Chief of the Imperial General Staff, from the G.O.C.-in-C. Palestine, General Haining, and several from the little Major-General who commanded the Division at Haifa, and whose name was Montgomery, later to become world famous as “Monty”.

I went on several operations with Colonel Duncan Dunn and I like to think that it was I who gave him his introduction to police work. Now a Brigadier, he has for some years been the Commandant of the Police Training College at Ryton-onDunsmore, which is to all of the British police forces what Sandhurst is to the Army. To many, a Regular Army officer must have seemed a strange choice for such an appointment, but those police officers from all over the British Isles and from every country within the Commonwealth who have been fortunate enough to be selected for courses at Ryton will share my view that there could not have been

a happier choice. It is to be regretted that the authorities who are charged with filling posts of this calibre are not always so clever or farseeing in their choice.

A fortnight after Abdul Rahim's death we were checking Abu Dorrah's village of Silet el Hartiyeh when my tame gangster Albert drew my attention to a courtyard where he said there used to be an underground cistern. There was no sign of such a place then, so we got spades and hoes and started to dig. We found the cistern, and in it no less than sixty-nine rifles, 5,000 rounds of ammunition, five land-mines and many other items of rebel equipment—it was in fact Abu Dorrah's main armoury. When we reported this find to Headquarters in the usual way I received a personal telegram of congratulation from Monty in Haifa, which he quickly followed up with another personal visit to see for himself. He seemed to me to be somewhat disappointed that many of the seized rifles were old and ill-cared for, but, of course, these were the weapons of the gangsters; it was asking a bit much to expect that they would all be modern sporting or military rifles in first-class condition.

In April, to my sincere regret, the 1st Battalion of the Border Regiment, with whom I had enjoyed such close and happy relations, were posted back to England; they were replaced by the 1st Battalion of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, another fine regiment who were only too anxious to carry on the close friendship and co-operation which had grown up between their predecessors and the police.

The Argylls quickly settled in and proved themselves to be an efficient and enthusiastic unit, ready to tackle the job in hand with all means in their power.

Soon after the departure of the Borders I decided that the time was ripe for some outward and visible sign of the improved state of security in Jenin. I therefore sent for the Mayor and notables and asked them their views on the effectiveness of the measures we had taken. With one accord they answered that law and order had been

restored in the town and that they were thankful of it, for they were law-abiding people. “In that case,” I replied, “there seems to be no good reason why you should not once more wear your tarbushes instead of the *hatta* and *agal* of the gangsters.”

The obsequious smiles froze on their faces as the import of this suggestion sank in. One of them choked, and the others gathered round, solicitously thumping him on the back and offering good advice. I waited patiently until order was restored, and they could evade the question no longer. They made all sorts of luke-warm objections, but were unable to refute the logic of my argument. Eventually I fixed the next Sunday, May 5th, for the reintroduction of tarbushes and sent them away.

When Sunday came I was up betimes and down at the Police Station by the time the shops started to open.

The few merchants who could be seen going about their business in the dark recesses of their stores were bareheaded— no sign of the familiar red headdress anywhere. I thought for a time that my scheme had failed, but then, down the middle of the street as large as life, swaggered Albert, with a fine new tarbush perched at a jaunty angle on his unkempt hair. I don’t suppose he’d ever worn a tarbush before in his life, but he certainly wore this one to good effect. Good old Albert!

Watching through the slats of the shutters on my office window, I saw another Arab—a shopkeeper this time—venture fearfully out into the street with a tarbush held awkwardly by his hip, for all the world like a naughty boy trying to hide the proceeds of his scrumping from the eye of an inquisitive householder.

Eventually, plucking up courage, he put it on, and I could see him heave a sigh of relief when this act of daring was not immediately met with a bullet through the back.

Gradually, in ones and twos at first and then in a stream, they

appeared in all directions—new tarbushes, old tarbushes, tarbushes battered and moth-eaten, dusty tarbushes and tarbushes which had obviously just been reblocked.

My venture into the realm of politics had succeeded beyond my wildest expectations; Jenin was the first place in the whole of Palestine to revert to the old traditional headgear of the Moslem townsman, and never again were the gangs able to force its people to forsake it for the flowing headdress of the *fellah*.

I mentioned the rebirth of the tarbush in my weekly report to Headquarters in Jerusalem, fondly imagining that this outward symbol of the restoration of law and order in my district would meet with the approbation of my betters. Not a bit of it. I received a short sharp note by return of post instructing me in unmistakable terms to confine myself to my police duties and not to interfere with matters which were rightly the function of the administration and were no concern of mine.

"Tarbush Sunday" in Jenin

I thought this rebuke to be unmerited; we had had three Assistant District Commissioners since the death of Moffatt, and the present one had not been there long enough to know the background and personalities well enough to be able to take this step himself with any chance of pulling it off. Nevertheless, he had known of my action and had heartily endorsed it, though he had not expected it to be successful.

Ten days after “Tarbush Sunday”, as it became known in Jenin, the Nazi Radio from Berlin, which had been egging on the Arabs and giving them support in their terrorist activities, launched a bitter attack on the cruel British police who had brutally torn the headdresses from the peaceful citizens of Jenin and forced them to parade up and down the street wearing the hated tarbush.

From the publicity they gave the incident it was clear that the Nazis realised the propaganda value of our achievement, even if the Palestine Government didn’t. We rather felt, indeed, that the Government itself could have done worse than take a leaf out of our modest book, for the country as a whole, with no fixed policy to work upon, was wallowing like a rudderless ship in a trough of uncertainty.

In 1937 a Royal Commission under Earl Peel had recommended the partition of the country into two separate Jewish and Arab states, the former to consist mainly of the fertile maritime plain while the larger area, mostly infertile hills and deserts, would constitute the Arab share. Jerusalem and Bethlehem, with a small strip of land running to the coast, would remain a British Mandate. These recommendations were made on the grounds that the aspirations of both parties were mutually exclusive and irreconcilable, and that in the circumstances a surgical operation was the only answer.

The Zionist Congress, meeting in Zurich the same year, reluctantly accepted this recommendation, but asked for a larger share of the country. The Arabs, on the other hand, turned it down

flat, and in this they were supported by all the other Arab states.

In 1938 the members of a Commission appointed by the Governors, under the chairmanship of Sir John Woodhead, to report further on the proposed partition, failed to reach agreement, and thereupon the scheme was dropped.

In 1939 a Government White Paper rejected the idea of an independent Jewish State on the grounds that it was incompatible with our obligations to the Arabs, and projected instead a policy for creating, after a ten-year transitional period, an independent state which would safeguard the essential interests of Jews and Arabs alike. In the meantime, Jewish immigration would be limited to a total of 75,000 over the next five years, and regulations restricting the sale of land would be introduced.

This policy also was promptly rejected by both the Arabs and the Jews, and the country continued its wallowing.

Chapter 14

ESSAYS IN UNORTHODOXY

I was due to go on leave again early in August, 1939, and this time I was to be married. As there was no suitable accommodation in Jenin for a married officer, it seemed unlikely that I should be posted back there again.

At the start of my tour in Jenin I had run—not very successfully—my own establishment, in a typical single-storey Arab house on the outskirts of the town.

For a few months I had lived in the house with only one Arab servant, wondering all the time when I should be blasted out of my bed by a gun poked between the window bars. My servant, who had obtained his post by outrageously describing himself as a cook, was poor company indeed. More often than not he was drunk, but it was only when I invited a couple of Army officers in for a drink one lunch-time, and later heard that I had plied them with pink water instead of pink gin, that I realised I was providing the wherewithal for his nightly carousals.

I think his masterpiece came when I invited Sergeant Denis Toulson back to lunch with me one day; as far as my guest was concerned, this was to appear a spontaneous invitation to take pot-luck, but, in fact, I had planned the occasion for some time. In Haifa the previous day I had acquired a veal, ham and egg pie of magnificent appearance and imposing dimensions, which had been flown out at great cost from England.

I went to some lengths to explain to my factotum just what to serve with this pie and what to put in the salad, adjuring him to

remain sober for the occasion at all costs.

The invitation was casually issued and accepted, and in due course the meal got off to an auspicious start. The tinned soup was hot, and the bread reasonably free from weevils. Then, after some delay, in came my beautiful veal, ham and egg pie. It had been thoroughly boiled, complete with its cardboard box: owing to the difficulty of separating one from the other, it was duly served, piping hot, still in its cardboard box!

I hated this short period in which I lived by myself—it seemed to me that I was a standing invitation to any gangster who wanted to earn himself a little prestige among his fellows; nobody else seemed to think anything of it, however, and I was too proud to admit that I was scared stiff and wanted some company.

To my relief, the Brigade Commander in Nablus learned on a visit that I was living alone, and he insisted that I must have at least two men to stay in the house with me. As the situation deteriorated throughout the country it was realised that my house was quite unsuitable from a defence angle, and I was given accommodation in the Army camp, whence my two escorts collected me every morning to take me to my office.

With the date of my impending leave fast approaching, and spurred on by the success of our combined operations, I decided to have an all-out drive to collect as many rebel firearms as possible from the villages in the area.

For some time I had been concentrating on gathering, through my band of agents, every scrap of information as to makes, types and owners of firearms in the various villages, all of which we carefully sorted and recorded.

The time had now come to put this information to good use; nearly every night we cordoned a village and, at dawn, assembled the inhabitants on the threshing floor. Each male would be asked

his name, which would be checked with our list and with the informers who were present. If a man were known to possess a rifle he would be told to go with a police escort to fetch it, the alternative being detention for an indefinite period under the Emergency Regulations which were then in force. When we were able to describe the firearm in some detail, specify occasions on which he had used it, and sometimes even quote the manufacturer's numbers to him, the owner would generally throw up the sponge and go off to dig up his rifle from its hiding-place on the outskirts of the village. Sometimes, of course, our information was false, or the owner had since disposed of his weapon; in which case he would be taken in for further enquiry.

The action we took at Yabad village early on in these proceedings did much to convince the inhabitants of the district that if we asked for their rifles it was as well to surrender them without argument.

I heard well in advance that Yabad would be difficult; when they learned that we were being successful in collecting rifles in other villages, the people of Yabad got together to plan what they would do when their turn came, as they knew it assuredly would. They decided that, whatever happened, not one of them would admit to having a firearm, let alone surrender it. The first two or three we called upon might be unlucky and get a rough passage, but they would stand fast and take what was coming to them. After all, we couldn't take the whole village to prison. Well content with their plans, the villagers sat back to await our arrival.

All this was relayed to me through my agents, and I, too, did some planning.

In due course we cordoned Yabad at night and moved in at dawn. All the inhabitants, male and female, were assembled on the threshing floor.

By prearranged signal, Albert identified to me one of the

ringleaders in the plot to defy the authorities—a young man who was known to have a good rifle of which we knew the make and number. For the purposes of this story we will call him Mustapha Yassin, though that was not his real name.

When all were squatting in the usual Arab manner, I went forward with the *mukhtar* beside me to address the assemblage. In Arabic I told them that our mission was a peaceful one, and that if the village co-operated they would have nothing to fear.

I then produced my notebook, called out the name of Mustapha Yassin as though it were the first on the list. I looked up expectantly, but there was no movement among the villagers, no sign to indicate that the man I had named was present. I turned to the *mukhtar* and asked him, so that all could hear, to indicate Mustapha Yassin. He looked round vaguely, shifting his weight from foot to foot, obviously discomfited. He mumbled something into his beard and, on being pressed, stated, with no conviction, that Mustapha Yassin was not present.

"Oh! Is that so?" I said, adding: "I will show you Mustapha Yassin." I looked carefully round the rows of swarthy faces, and then threaded my way towards the man I wanted.

"Get up and follow me," I told him, and led him back to the spot where the *mukhtar* was intently studying the dust at his feet. "This is Mustapha Yassin," I told him, devoutly praying that Albert had made no mistake. "Go and sit down!" With a look of relief, the *mukhtar* went and joined his villagers.

I turned my attention to Mustapha. "You have a Belgian rifle in good condition, No. 66813, which you used when your gang attacked Arrabeh village on the eighteenth of last month." Mustapha opened his mouth to protest his innocence, but I silenced him with a gesture. "You will now go and bring it here." Again he started to protest, saying that he had never owned a gun, that he was the most law-abiding citizen in Yabad, and that somebody who

was interested in his wife had given this false information against him in order to get him out of the way. This time I heard him out, then once more told him to go and get his rifle.

Once more the protestations. I said to him, “Mustapha, from the villagers of Yamoun and Kfar Rai, from Arrani and Meithalun, we have collected their rifles. Do you think you can succeed where they have failed? Listen carefully to what I have to say. If you do not go now and bring me back your rifle I shall kill you.”

He looked at me doubtfully. Was I bluffing or did I really mean it? His eyes searched my face, and I did my best to maintain an air of stern implacability and to hide my own doubts as to the wisdom of what I was about to do. To threaten and then to back down before the whole village would be a sign of weakness, and would result in considerable loss of prestige. I must know that, so what really were my intentions? I gave him a moment to consider the position, watching the uncertainty in his expression disappear as he remembered the plan for unity and non-co-operation made by his fellow villagers.

“Well?” I asked, and again he started on his story.

Drawing my automatic from my pocket, I swung him round and pushed him with my left hand towards a nearby house. We went behind it out of sight of the villagers squatting 30 yards away.

The sound of my first shot and the blood-chilling scream which followed it reverberated round the hills and put the village pigeons into the air in a panic.

I fired again, and the scream ended abruptly.

I walked back to the police and soldiers standing in front of the villagers, replacing the magazine in my pistol with a full clip as I did so.

On my instructions, two of my men got a stretcher from an

armoured car and went with me round behind the house where I had taken Mustapha. After a few moments they reappeared carrying a stretcher with Mustapha on it. His face was covered with his own *hatta*, but his fellows could identify him by his clothes. As he was carried slowly past the assembled villagers to the armoured car a stifled wail rose from one of the women at the back, as though attempting, with little hope of success, to dispel the electrified silence which hung over the proceedings. The rays of the brilliant sun seemed to lose their heat, and even I felt a cold shiver tingle around my spine.

I supervised the placing of the stretcher and its grisly load in the car and returned to the business in hand.

"Ahmed el Haj Yousef!" I called, and Ahmed el Haj Yousef came forward at once.

"Ahmed," I said, "I want you to go now and fetch your rifle for me." I started to give him the details, but he did not need them.

"Na'amya Sidi! Ncfamya Sidif" and off he went, pathetically eager to co-operate and desperately anxious not to share the fate of his predecessor.

I called the next name, and the next, and without hesitation they all went off under police or military escort to do our bidding.

Not all the people on our list were in the village, but all those who were fetched their firearms without demur.

When the last one had returned I fetched Mustapha Yassin from the armoured car; there was an incredulous gasp from the villagers at this apparent resurrection of the dead, which turned first into a titter and then into a wave of hearty laughter at the realisation that they had been completely hoaxed.

The Arab, a past master of intrigue himself, has a keen sense of humour and can always appreciate a joke, even when it's on him.

The noise subsided somewhat as I turned once more to my erstwhile victim. “Oh, Mustapha!” I said, pointing to the pile of rifles at our feet. “I was right in all these cases. Do you still wish to say that I was wrong in yours?” There was a moment’s hesitation, and I feared that perhaps he alone would still call my bluff. But then, to my relief, a voice from the crowd—probably the owner of one of the rifles already surrendered—called out to him to fetch his rifle. Others joined in, and the battle was ours. With a grin, Mustapha acknowledged defeat and went off to collect what was the best rifle of the day’s haul.

My two thugs, Albert and Faiz, who had made their way unobtrusively behind the selected house while the villagers were being rounded up, had played their part in our little tragedy most effectively. Albert’s scream had been so realistic that, although I was expecting it, it had made me jump almost out of my skin, and the way in which he cut it off dead when I fired my second shot into the ground was nothing short of an artistic masterpiece; Faiz’s task had been to keep our victim quiet and prevent him giving the game away, which he had accomplished by a combination of fearsome grimaces and whispered blood-curdling threats as to what would really happen to him if he as much as uttered a word or moved a finger before he was safely hidden in the armoured car.

I was greatly relieved that this—this experiment in psychological warfare ?—had gone off so well, though after the reprimand I acquired by my well-meaning and successful efforts to restore the tarbush to normal use I took good care to see that the methods we had adopted on this occasion were not reported to Jerusalem.

The G.O.C. Palestine, General Sir Robert Haining, in a letter written about me to the Inspector-General of Police on July 13th, 1939, when he was handing over his command, said, among other things:

> “... With the Border Regiment first, and later with the

> Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, he has been on the closest of terms, and his flair for obtaining information and for keeping in close contact with the people of the country has resulted in the surrendering of a perfect stream of firearms which has frankly surprised me by its size and continuity. . . .”

Perhaps he would have been even more surprised if he had known how we did it!

Certainly our methods proved successful, for I see from my diary (which is by no means a complete record) that over 300 rifles, 40 pistols and 133 shotguns were seized by police and military in the Jenin area during the months of June and July, 1939. Some of these were captured during actions with gangs, but the majority came into our possession solely as a result of the methodical collection and effective use of informers and information. I would be the last person to suggest that we had denuded the area of all its firearms, but there is no doubt that our activities did make a very big hole in the total rebel fire-power. And it was gratifying to know that our seizures in Jenin easily exceeded the total seized from the rest of the country put together during the same period.

On July 24th I was lucky enough to capture one of Abu Dorrah’s two ceremonial swords, complete in silver scabbard, from Zbuba village, where he had left it for safe custody. The other had been presented by some of our agents to the Border Regiment on their departure from Palestine.

There was one particular weapon I tried my hardest to seize, but without success. I have said earlier that the Arab is blessed with a sense of humour; never did he demonstrate this more effectively—and, indeed, his courage and daring too —than the night when he crept through the barbed-wire defences of the Black Watch outpost at Silet-ed-Dahar and removed a complete trench mortar from under the very nose of an armed sentry. The Black Watch came in for some black looks the next day when they had to report the loss,

and the G.O.C. paid them a visit to express his views on the matter in person.

I did my best to obtain information as to the whereabouts of the stolen mortar, but, although Silet-ed-Dahar was just within my divisional area, the thieves took good care to remove their booty well away from our sphere of influence with the least possible delay; it was eventually recovered in the Tulkarm area some months later.

Chapter 15

CHEAP VICTORY

After a warm farewell from the Argylls, I left Haifa by air and arrived in London on August Bank Holiday, 1939.

Three weeks later, with Bob Jarrett (on leave from Nigeria) as my best man, I was married. I thereby acquired a loyal, devoted, long-suffering and courageous wife and counsellor, while the Colonial Service acquired an unpaid, unthanked telephone orderly-cum-secret agent.

Like so many occasions in our married life, however, our honeymoon was destined to be interrupted by force of circumstances, for at the end of the first week war was declared.

I returned at once to London and reported myself to the Colonial Office for instructions. Within a couple of weeks I found myself on board the S.S. *Franconia*, a transatlantic liner commandeered for use as a troopship, in a convoy bound for Port Said, having said goodbye to my new wife for—I was quite sure—the duration of the war.

In spite of a number of alarms and excursions, we had an uneventful trip until we were off the coast of Sicily. We had all practised our lifeboat drill until we knew it backwards, and the lifeboats themselves were slung outboard on their davits, ready for instant lowering if we were torpedoed.

The weather was perfect—not a cloud in the sky nor a ripple on the sea; there were eight large transatlantic liners in the convoy, all spaced out with geometric precision on the mirror-like sea, and all zigzagging impeccably at prearranged intervals. Then, in mid-

afternoon, the crew and passengers on deck became aware of a faint humming, and all eyes scanned the sky in the direction of the Italian mainland. Soon a tiny speck was discerned which grew rapidly and, as the noise of its engines increased, resolved itself into an Italian military seaplane. It circled round the convoy at a respectful distance, with every eye watching it—at least, nearly every eye: there must have been one man, however, on the bridge of either my ship or on the next nearest ship to us, the S.S. Alcantara, who remembered that the time had come either to zig or to zag, as the case may be; he tore his attention from the seaplane long enough to give the helmsman the new course and then went back to his plane-watching. The nett result was that while the S.S. *Franconia* was zigging the S.S. *Alcantara* was zagging (or vice versa).

In due course the converging courses converged, and the bows of the S.S. *Franconia* hit the bows of the S.S. *Alcantara* at high speed, at an angle of about 45 degrees; after the initial shock, the impetus of their movement brought the ships together along the whole length of their sides, smashing their outswung lifeboats one after another as though they were matchboxes.

I was playing bridge in the lounge when the collision occurred and, as “Lifeboat Stations” was sounded, I came out on deck and made my way to my appointed station. As I stood there opposite the few bits of matchwood dangling from the crumpled davit I saw the seaplane go past, still keeping his distance. I watched it with interest, half expecting it to nose-dive into the sea, for I felt that if the pilot had any sense of humour in him at all he must be rolling on the floor of his cockpit in paroxysms of mirth at the masterly exhibition of Britannia ruling the waves which he had just witnessed!

This must surely have been the cheapest Axis victory ever— two large liners seriously damaged without firing a shot or dropping a single bomb, all for the price of a few gallons of petrol!

I have often wondered whether this incident influenced

Mussolini's decision to enter the war on the side of Germany. He might well have thought he was in for an easy victory if this was a sample of what he was up against.

We limped into Malta with a hole in our bows and a distinct list, and there we were transferred to another ship in the convoy, in which we completed our journey without further incident.

Chapter 16

TRANSFER TO TEL AVIV

Jenin had been a difficult station by any standards, but when, on returning to Palestine, I was informed that my next job was to take over command of the Lydda District C.I.D., I realised that I had even bigger problems to face.

From my point of view there were three distinct drawbacks to this new appointment—firstly, that I was completely without experience in C.I.D. work; secondly, that during the last eighteen months I had been dealing exclusively with Arabs in rural areas, whereas much of my work would now be connected with Jews and urban areas; and, thirdly, that apart from one or two one-day trips from Jerusalem some years earlier, I had no personal knowledge or experience of the large and important areas concerned.

Lydda Police District consisted of the five big divisions of Jaffa, Tel Aviv, Rehovoth, Ramleh and Ramat Gan. Jaffa, of course, was an ancient Arab town with several Jewish quarters and suburbs, while Tel Aviv, which adjoins it, is an entirely Jewish, completely new city which did not exist at the end of the first war.

Here had been a wonderful opportunity to design and create a model town in ideal surroundings but, for one reason or another—and the British administration must share the blame with the Jewish Civic Authorities for this state of affairs—the invention of the internal combustion engine seems to have been completely overlooked by the creators of Tel Aviv. Hardly any houses had a garage or garage space and, in consequence thousands of vehicles of all kinds were parked day and night in streets which were, with a few notable exceptions, so narrow that they had to be restricted to

one-way traffic.

Dizengoff Circus, the opera house, the concert hall and some of the cinemas are well designed and built, but, on the whole, Tel Aviv is a city of missed opportunity.

For a week or two I found accommodation in an hotel on the sea front, but before I had time to make any more permanent arrangements I received a letter from my wife which filled me with joy: she had managed to get a passage out on an Orient liner and would arrive in a few weeks! This, with a war on, was no small achievement, but it was typical of the resourcefulness she has since displayed on many occasions.

There was one incident in connection with this trip which has never ceased to amuse me, and I beg leave to recount it. Two days before she was due to sail, my father, who should have known better, was indulging in careless talk over the fence at the bottom of his garden in Dulwich with a neighbour whom he knew well by sight but not by name. He told her that his daughter-in-law, who was staying with him, was sailing for Port Said in two days' time and, on being pressed, told her that the ship was the S.S. *Orion*. "In that case," said the lady, "I wonder whether she would be so kind as to do me a very great favour and take my husband's dressing-gown with her. He is the Captain of the *Orion*, and he went off without it. I am Lady Owens." My wife duly took the dressing-gown and was rewarded by cocktails in the Captain's cabin on the first night, thus arousing considerable curiosity among the other passengers—most of whom were hardened travellers—as to her connection with that august personage.

Faced with the need to provide a home for a wife at short notice, I did some intensive house-hunting and was most fortunate to secure an excellent unfurnished Swiss-owned bungalow on the outskirts of Sarona, a mile north of the Tel Aviv boundary and just off the road to Haifa.

The German Aryan inhabitants of Sarona itself had been interned by the simple process of throwing a barbed-wire fence around the whole colony. My house was one of half a dozen which were outside the wire.

By the time the S.S. *Orion* arrived in Port Said I had acquired a few pieces of furniture and a few basic foodstuffs, and in due course we settled down together in our first home.

And so to work. During my last few months in Jenin, while we had been improving the state of law and order among the Arabs, there had been a steady increase in Jewish terrorism in the big towns. In Haifa, in particular, donkeys bearing large time-bombs had been driven into the vegetable market and had eventually blown up, killing and maiming dozens of Arab men, women and children. The Irgun, in pamphlets widely distributed after each of these mass murders, had claimed responsibility for them, stating that they were in retaliation for attacks by Arabs on Jews.

A number of leading members of the Irgun had been arrested in connection with the murder of Cairns and Barker and these subsequent incidents, but, in the absence of adequate evidence on which to bring them for trial, they had been detained under the Emergency Regulations.

On the outbreak of war the Irgun got into touch with the Government, stating that it regarded the war against Nazism as the major issue, and that members of its organisation would shelve their differences with the Palestine Government until the war had been won: on the strength of this assurance the detained members of the Irgun were at once released.

Prominent among them was Abraham Stern, who was the leader of the shock troops of the Irgun. He was a brilliant organiser, fanatically anti-British, and was known to have planned and supervised many assassinations and mass-murders for the Irgun.

As soon as he was released from detention he dissociated himself from the undertaking given by the Irgun leaders and announced that he would continue to wage war against the British with every means in his power. The extremist members of the Irgun threw in their lot with him in this matter, and thus was born the Stern Gang: for some time it was officially known in Government circles as the Stern Group, and more than once in the early days I found myself in trouble with my superiors for calling a spade a spade and referring to it in my political summaries as a gang.

For a time Stern and his minions contented themselves with disseminating anti-British propaganda, urging Jews by means of leaflets, by slogans painted on walls and by broadcasting over a secret radio in Tel Aviv not to support the war efforts, and not to enlist in the British Army. They provided themselves with funds for this work by a system of robbery and extortion from rich Jews, kidnapping and holding to ransom any who refused to pay up on demand.

Although the Stern Gang were the extreme wing of the Jewish political hierarchy, they had at this period, strangely enough, much in common with the Jewish Communist Party, which was also busily engaged in painting "Down with the Imperialist War!" and "Jews! don't enlist in the British Army!" all over the streets and buildings of Tel Aviv. The Communists were indeed a *bete noir* to us until Russia's entry into the war completely took the wind out of their sails. Even after that the local Communists were never half as vociferous in supporting the joint war effort as they had previously been in damning it, but turned their attention to demanding a second front in Europe long before it was possible to oblige them.

We all took our Communists very seriously, but it was sometimes difficult to measure up to the requirements of C.I.D. Headquarters in Jerusalem in this respect. There was an officer there whose main function was to deal with Communism, and I was sometimes forced to conclude that he was carried away by his own

zeal. He would write and say that — of — was a Communist suspect —would we please keep him under surveillance and report in detail on his activities? This meant striking off a British or a Jewish detective for some time, generally to no good purpose. At first I used to report faithfully on all the suspect's contacts, saying where he went, what he did and to whom he spoke. I soon found, however, that that did not always pay, for then we were expected to treat every such contact as a Communist in turn. In fact, the whole thing was capable of multiplying like a chain letter if one did not watch it, and the really important information was liable to get bogged down in a morass of irrelevancy. On one occasion, for instance, we reported (for want of anything more exciting) that a Communist suspect had twice running had his lunch at a certain cafe on the sea-front, and on both occasions had been seen in conversation with a waiter named "X". A fortnight later back came a letter from Headquarters—it was reliably reported that "X", a waiter in the — Cafe, was a Communist; would we please keep him under strict surveillance, and report his movements? No reference was made to the fact that we had originally reported the existence of "X", and I am quite sure that my zealous friend at Headquarters had never heard of him from any other source!

One of the major problems in my new command was how to deal with the determined efforts of Hagana, the Irgun and the Stern Gang to acquire as many firearms and as much ammunition as possible by any means which presented themselves. This included theft from military installations where the control was not as effective as it might have been and the payment of large sums of money to any members of the armed forces who could be persuaded to assist in procuring firearms for them.

Every weapon and every round of ammunition so acquired was one less rifle and one less bullet to fire against the Afrika Korps and, of course, the activities of these organisations meant that large numbers of troops who might have been better employed were tied up guarding armouries and arms dumps.

Chapter 17

ARAB HOSPITALITY

On the other side of the picture, the Arabs of Jaffa and the surrounding areas were refreshingly quiet, and it seemed that the death of Abdul Rahim and the capture of Abu Dorrah had virtually brought the revolt to an end.

Profiting by my experience in Jenin, I organised an intensive campaign to collect rifles from the villages in the district, and in no time at all we got in enough to fit out the C.I.D. mess and canteen with entirely new furniture and equipment throughout from the proceeds. (A sum of £3 was paid for every serviceable rifle seized.)

The attitude of the villagers was markedly different from that we had encountered in Jenin, and, in fact, they could not do enough for us. We were bombarded with invitations to lunch in the villages, and some of these we were obliged to accept.

An Arab lunch was not an event to be undertaken lightly. Let me describe the first to which I took my wife.

Our host was the *mukhtar* of a village to the south of Jaffa; we were asked to arrive at twelve o'clock, and the invitation was extended to the whole of the C.I.D. I compromised by taking about a dozen hungry detectives, who could be relied upon to do justice to the occasion.

We arrived at the village square at the appointed time, and my wife was most intrigued to see the village women beating their washing on stone capitals, which obviously originated from some Crusader church.

The *mukhtar*, a cheery soul, was waiting with the village elders to greet us. He had not met my wife before, and he did not know the extent of my family, but he was not going to spare himself in extending to us a most friendly welcome. "Welcome, *ya Sitt*" said he. "Welcome to our poor village! We are honoured indeed by your presence here. How many sons have you given the master?" Having translated his remarks to my wife, I informed him that, alas, we were childless. (I did not think it necessary to explain that we had only been married four months.) His face dropped for a moment in unconcealed disappointment, for what sort of a wife was this who could not produce even one son? Then his face brightened and, slapping his own little round corporation most heartily, he pointed from it to my wife's slim tummy and exclaimed: "*Insh'allah* [Please God] you're in the family way now" My poor wife did not understand the Arabic, but the meaning was unmistakable. She smiled gracefully through her blushes, nodding warmly but inaccurately: her confusion was no greater than that of the dozen bachelor policemen who witnessed the incident.

The ceremony of welcome completed, we were led to a row of chairs on a covered terrace overlooking a small reservoir. Here we were plied for more than an hour with cups of thick, sweet Arabic coffee, which we drank, and with ample supplies of Scotch whisky, which, much to the disappointment of our host, none of us touched. It was very pleasant sitting there in the shade looking out over the orange groves sweltering in the hot sun below us, with many-hued dragonflies skimming busily over the placid water at our feet. One cannot—indeed, must not—attempt to hurry these affairs, but it was a weekday, and we all had plenty of work to do when we got back to our offices: besides which, we were all beginning to feel somewhat peckish.

Just as I decided that we could wait no longer in came the pre-lunch snacks—dishes of green and black olives, sliced tomato in vinegar, cubes of goat's-milk cheese, sardines, pieces of fried chicken liver swimming in oil, and (that favourite of all Palestine

policemen) *kebab*—little lumps of mutton or goat served on the skewers on which they had been roasted over a charcoal fire.

We could all have made a perfectly adequate meal of these delicious titbits, but those of us who were old hands warned the others not to do more than nibble one little piece.

Then a couple of retainers arrived carrying pitchers, soap and towels, and we took it in turns to squat down and have water poured over our hands while we washed them.

This was a sign that the main meal would not be long delayed and, sure enough, in a few moments we were ushered to a veranda some distance away. Here a long trestle table had been erected and covered with a white cloth. As we approached, a cloud of flies, like a swarm of miniature locusts, rose reluctantly into the air, gorged to the point of sluggishness on the masses of food with which the table was laden.

We were each handed a bath towel to tuck in at our necks and invited to seat ourselves before the opened bottles of whisky which adorned every single place.

Our hosts, in true Arab fashion, refused to sit down with us, but placed themselves behind our shoulders so as to be able to ensure that we lacked nothing.

On the table, for the fourteen of us who sat down, there were some forty roasted pigeons, a couple of dozen chickens and about four large turkeys all stuffed with rice and pine kernels. In the centre of the table, in front of my wife and myself, was a complete roast sheep, head and all, also stuffed with rice mixed with bits of chopped offal. In addition, there were many large dishes of sliced tomato, olives, cheese and sardines, and mountains of loaves of unleavened bread like giant pancakes 3 feet in diameter.

To start the meal a vast dish of baked red mullet, each nearly 2 lb. in weight, was produced and one was plonked on the plate

before each guest. We were given a dessert spoon and fork with which to augment our hands, though, when all is said and done, the right hand is the tool provided by the good Allah for man to eat with.

We were disappointing guests, I am afraid, for, much to our host's surprise, the whisky remained untouched. What, he enquired anxiously, was the matter with it? Was it bad, or the wrong brand, perhaps? He had been assured when he bought it that it was the real stuff, and everybody knew that Englishmen drink whisky. He eventually produced some very warm Eagle beer and some equally warm, sweet, fizzy lemonade, and, diplomatically, we resisted his attempt to pep them up with half a tumbler of whisky.

However, by the time we had toyed with the uppermost half of our large fish, our host had recovered his good spirits once more and promptly set about doing justice to my wife, the guest of honour and the only woman present.

Leaning over her shoulder towards the middle of the table, he hooked the little finger of his right hand into the eye socket of the roast sheep and then withdrew it, with the eyeball itself balanced on the end. With a graceful flourish and a charming smile he presented it, still precariously balanced on his finger, to my wife.

I hissed: "Whatever you do, don't refuse it. Take it and swallow it!"

She turned green and, drawing the corners of her mouth back into what was meant to be a pleasant smile, but was, in fact, a frightful grimace, she took the thing between her forefinger and thumb, closed her eyes and literally threw it down her gullet, chasing it down with a long draught of sickly lemonade.

Pleased with the apparent appreciation of his act of courtesy, our host now wrenched the entire head of the sheep from its spinal column, cracked the skull on the cement floor, levered it open by

inserting his thumbs in the crack and then extracted the whole of the brain and placed it proudly before my wife.

This, I felt, was too much to ask of her, and I stepped in to explain that the doctor would not permit her to eat mutton and, while she had been unable to resist the temptation to consume the eyeball, it would be unwise for her to indulge further.

Nothing daunted, our host inserted his right arm into the belly of the sheep and brought forth a fistful of luscious rice. As he squeezed it, the excess oil oozed out between his fingers, and he carefully moulded it with his right hand (the left is unclean) into a ball and presented that to my wife.

We each ate our way through a few chickens, half a turkey and a leg of lamb, and then turned our attention to the huge tray of flaky pastry dripping with honey and to the masses of fruit—sweet, juicy Jaffa oranges, great bunches of magnificent grapes, bananas and chunks of red-fleshed water melon.

This, followed by more coffee, was our lunch; it was just as well that it is considered polite to belch heartily when one's host is an Arab—we were all most polite and, indeed, would have found it difficult to be otherwise.

After a decent interval we took our farewell and waddled uncertainly to our cars, all thought of work driven from our heads by the vision of our cool beds, on which we would collapse just as soon as we could get to them.

Chapter 18

INTRODUCTION TO JEWISH POLITICS

Benefiting from my previous experience in Jenin, I went to some pains to build up the criminal and political records in my formation; every bit of information or gossip and every name which came to our notice for any reason was carefully sifted, assessed and indexed for future reference.

This work was done solely by British police, and in due course we had a record system and a fund of knowledge on the activities of political organisations and personalities comparable with that at C.I.D. Headquarters in Jerusalem.

I was very fortunate indeed in so far as my staff was concerned. My second-in-command was Inspector Wilkin, known to all and sundry as Wilkie; he was a veritable tower of strength in every way, an excellent investigator and prosecutor, and a first-class Hebrew-speaker; he knew more about Jewish politics and organisations than the rest of the Palestine Police put together. He had the added virtue—and a very important one, too—of being good on paper, a virtue possessed equally by his assistant in the Jewish affairs section, Sergeant Stamp, with the result that the intelligence summaries for Police Headquarters, which they jointly wrote and which I signed, not only contained a wealth of valuable information, but were all eminently readable and, in their own way, veritable gems of English prose. It is to be regretted that, such was the nature of their contents, they could never achieve the publicity they deserved.

I placed myself at Wilkie's feet to learn all I could of the Jewish political set-up, which was so involved that many of the Jews themselves had but a hazy idea of the affiliations and functions of many of the groups. I had been at pains to acquire a reasonable knowledge of Hebrew while in the Haifa Traffic Section and, while it did not compare with Wilkie's, either in fluency or vocabulary, it stood me in good stead after I had brushed it up a little.

In addition, I had some thirty British detectives and about forty Palestinians, both Jews and Arabs, in my new command, and let it be placed on record here and now that there never has been a finer body of men in the history of the British Empire.

Irrespective of race, creed or politics, they worked together as one big team, united in their determination to do all in their power to maintain law and order.

The British detectives were accommodated in the same building as the offices, but the Palestinian members of my staff had to live out.

Life was particularly hard for the Jewish detectives, who lived in Tel Aviv, for they and their families were always subject to coercion, and they were in constant danger, particularly if they were thought to be active in the execution of their duty. Some of them—particularly the more senior in rank—we knew to be members of Hagana, to which organisation they were expected to pass on any useful information which came their way.

I therefore took good care to see that our operational plans were kept secret from them and that they had access to no information which I wanted kept from Hagana. On occasion I used them to pass false information, and thus create a smokescreen around our real intentions.

Co-operation by members of the public in the enforcement of law and order was the exception rather than the rule; this applied

particularly in Tel Aviv, where a person arrested by the police for any offence only had to call out that he was an illegal immigrant for every Jew within hearing to set upon the police and release the prisoner. As, more often than not, the prisoner was wanted for wounding or robbing a fellow Jew and had probably been born in Palestine anyway, this sort of action was inclined to boomerang.

To start with I found information hard to come by, and unreliable when it did come, but I pursued my policy of treating it all as true until I had proved it to be false, and slowly but surely it became known that there was good money to be had in the C.I.D. for good information.

A few months after I took over my duties I was approached by a young Jew, whom I will call Jacques, who had information to sell. He had arrived from Europe about a year earlier and had since been living in a Jewish colony of Mishmar Shalosh in Galilee and had inside knowledge of another near Jerusalem.

From him I bought information as to the exact location of the illegal armoury in the Galilee colony, and in due course received permission from Jerusalem to act on it, which I did on January 16th, 1940.

This information proved to be correct, for we seized no less than 13 German and 2 English rifles, 2 automatic pistols, 45 bombs of Polish manufacture, 10 American grenades, 1,190 rounds of rifle and pistol ammunition and an assortment of detonators, grenade cups, range-setters, cleaning-rods and other impedimenta—all carefully hidden under the tiled floor of the Jewish Supernumerary police post!

I arrested the Jewish Sergeant in charge of the post, handed him over to the police in Nazareth (who took a jaundiced view of my activities in their area) and went post-haste to Jerusalem to report.

On the 22nd of the same month I raided the important colony of

Ben Shemen, again acting on information supplied by Jacques. Fortunately, this colony was in my own area, and I needed no special permission from Headquarters to raid it, which was just as well. Here, also under the floor of the police post, we seized 27 rifles, 5 sub-machine guns, 8,515 rounds of ammunition, 26 grenades, 38 machine-gun magazines, a wireless transmitter and masses of detonators, gelignite and fuse wire. I tried to get early authority to take similar action against the Jerusalem colony of which Jacques had told me, but this was now big stuff indeed, and doubtless had to be referred to the highest levels before permission could be granted. By the time it came through it was too late; the hiding-place was there all right, but it was empty—the delay had given time for all the armouries in all the supernumerary police posts in all the Jewish colonies throughout Palestine to be emptied and the contents cached elsewhere. If only it had been politically possible for all these places to be raided simultaneously, and without delay, what a haul that would have been! Alas! it is too much to expect decisions of that calibre to be taken quickly in a democracy.

After my initial interview with Jacques, I met him many times to pay him money and hear his news. I would go out for a drive with my wife quite often in the evenings, and sometimes, by previous arrangement, would pick up Jacques at an appointed spot in a quiet street. We would carry on our conversation as we drove along, while he lay on the floor at the back with a blanket over him. We exchanged news and money and fixed our next meeting, and when I was satisfied that we had not been followed I would stop for a moment in a deserted street and let him out.

Unfortunately, Jacques had the failings common to his breed — he was over-confident, and money burned a hole in his pocket. I warned him repeatedly to be careful and urged him to let me keep the money for him, but he knew best. We dropped him one dark evening in an empty street, drove up and down the sea-front once and went home to our supper. The 'phone was ringing as I opened

the door, and I learned from the Duty Officer that there had been a shooting in Tel Aviv. I knew what had happened before he told me the name of the street.

I went straight back; there was Jacques, with six bullet holes in him, and the usual notice pinned to his chest—"Tried by a Jewish Military Court, found guilty of treason, sentenced to death and duly executed."

A very efficient piece of detective work by the Hagana, this, but they were not always so clever; for instance, when a handsome youth of sixteen came to see me one day to enquire about the possibility of getting an entry permit for a relative. He was in Headquarters no more than ten minutes, and in my office only five of them. I had never seen him before, but I saw him again the next morning—lying on a Tel Aviv pavement with the usual six bullet holes in his back, but no notice on this occasion. Perhaps his assassin did not think it wise to stop for that formality, for the street was crowded at the time.

Strangely enough, the *mukhtar* of Ben Shemen was blamed for giving me the information about the whereabouts of the village armoury in his colony, and I believe he came in for a pretty rough time from his fellow colonists. It was no part of my job to disillusion them on this point, and indeed had I attempted to do so it would undoubtedly have signed the poor man's death warrant.

In February, 1940, I received information as to the existence of a large illegal arsenal in the synagogue in Ben Yehuda Street. The information was contained in a letter which came through the post. Enclosed with it was half a torn cigarette card bearing the picture of a patriarch named David Vardi. The letter was written in German, and the author said he would contact me after the raid had been carried out and produce the other half of the picture to identify himself.

In view of the religious and political implications of such a raid,

this was too big a matter for me to take upon myself, so I reported it post-haste to Jerusalem, saying that it fitted in with other information in my possession, and asking for authority to organise a search. I never got it, nor indeed any reply to my report, and the raid never took place. I was disappointed at not being allowed to follow up this lead, for I felt it in my bones to be a good one. If anybody has the other half of a picture of Mr. David Vardi around, I should be pleased to see it!

Over a year later—on March 15th, 1941, to be exact—I seized another arms dump buried in the sand at Bat Yam, the Jewish residential seaside suburb of Jaffa. This consisted of 16 French rifles, 2 automatic pistols, 3 revolvers, 1,191 rounds of ammunition and the usual assortment of gelignite, fuse-wire, detonators and other warlike sundries.

To the best of my knowledge, the cases I have recounted above were the only instances in which illegal Jewish armouries were seized during the whole of my stay in Palestine.

The insidious approach to troops to sell their firearms for fancy prices went on all the time, and nobody will ever know just how successful it was. The military co-operated as much as possible to keep it down, but it was, after all, of secondary consideration to the fight going on in the Western Desert. Not every approach was successful, however, and sometimes even the most likely bets came unstuck. The case of the sergeantmajor was one of them. He was a regular soldier and an Englishman. He was also a Jew. Hagana made the mistake of assuming that he would be Jewish first and English second.

He was in charge of an ammunition dump at Wadi Sarar in the Ramleh area, and so must have seemed to be the ideal contact and to have great possibilities.

He was, therefore, approached and his co-operation sought. He listened carefully to the request and agreed to steal a box of -303

ammunition from his own dump, put it in the back of a taxi and drive to the junction of Allenby Street and the Jaffa Road in Tel Aviv, where he would be met and given further instructions.

After receiving these instructions, he came in to see me to report the matter and to place himself in my hands.

This was quite a problem; it was easy, of course, to foil the would-be purchasers by telling the Sergeant-major not to cooperate, but what we had to do was to let the transaction go through and then try to catch the purchasers actually in possession of the ammunition.

Without this there could be no case, for if we picked them up at the rendezvous they would deny all knowledge of the transaction, and it could hardly be their intention to take delivery of their booty in such a conspicuous place. Then, too, there would certainly be scouts out at points of vantage to make sure that the taxi was not being followed by a police car and that there were no plain-clothes men in the vicinity of the rendezvous.

I did some hard thinking and, in due course, made my plans to deal with the matter.

At the appointed time and place up drove a large taxi, driven by an Arab, with the Sergeant-major sitting on the back seat; he had a full box of ammunition covered by a blanket at his feet.

After he had waited a few moments, a couple of men who had been looking in a shop window came up to the car and started to chat to him. One of them was the man who had approached him originally. The Sergeant-major's nod in answer to his raised eyebrows told him what he wanted to know. Another minute passed, and then one of the men acknowledged a signal from down the street, presumably giving the all clear.

The original contact, who appeared to be the leader, suddenly thrust a banknote into the driver's hand and said in Arabic, "You

wait here. I will bring your taxi back in under half an hour and I will pay you well." He half dragged the surprised driver out into the road, and the two men jumped into the front seat, slammed her into gear and drove quickly away.

When one is planning this sort of operation one always has to allow for the unexpected. This Arab driver was in my pay and was a vital part of my plan. I thought I had considered every possibility, but his ejection from his own taxi had certainly not entered into my calculations.

The two Jews drove the car around the streets of Tel Aviv for over a quarter of an hour, with the Sergeant-major sitting on the seat behind them. They then drove out past Sarona towards Ramat Gan, looking all the time to see whether they were being followed, and for other signs of police activity. At length they turned back into Tel Aviv again, drove up a quiet cul-de-sac and stopped. They jumped out and stood beside the car for a couple of minutes, looking back towards the end of the street for any suspicious movement. At length, obviously satisfied with the elaborate precautions they had taken, they opened the door of the taxi, removed the blanket and lifted out the box of ammunition. As they straightened up again, holding the box between them, each felt the jab of a revolver in the small of his back, held in the steady hands of Detective Sergeants Kenneth Hutchens and "Busty" Woodward. It was only when they came up for trial that they learned how the police had been able to spring the trap at the crucial moment, and their jaws dropped when they heard the evidence. Hutchens and Woodward had been all the time concealed in the boot of the taxi, and in all their precautionary manoeuvres, designed to ensure that they could not possibly be followed, the two luckless Jews had actually been driving round with them, the very people they were trying so hard to evade.

Chapter 19

HUNT FOR A MURDERER

Although politics figured largely in the cases handled by the C.I.D., we dealt also with a good deal of crime of a non-political nature.

A case in point was that of Ali Husni Siksik, though we took no part in the initial investigation which was carried out by the uniformed branch.

On the morning of June 18th, 1940, an Arab Police Inspector was walking along the Ajami Road in Jaffa when his curiosity was aroused by a large sack lying on some waste ground beyond a low wall.

It had not been there when he had passed that way the previous evening. A closer inspection revealed ominous brown stains on the under part of the sack, and the shape of the contents was that of a neatly folded human body.

The Inspector sent a passer-by for assistance, and before long more police arrived, including a dog and dog-master.

The sack was cut open and found to contain the body of an Arab youth whose death had presumably been caused by the multiple stab wounds in the throat, neck and body.

The dog was given the scent from the sack and promptly set off on the trail, closely followed by the police party and a procession of interested spectators. Without hesitation, the dog led the way to a house in the Ajami quarter belonging to an Arab notable named Husni Siksik. It was a two-storey house, but only the ground floor

was occupied; the upper floor was indeed but a skeleton of concrete blocks, the completion of which had obviously been deferred until times were more prosperous.

Ali Husni Siksik, The Terror of Jaffa

The dog led straight to the door of the outside staircase leading to the upper floor, and the police noted with increasing interest the

bloody imprint of a complete hand on the lintel. At the top of the stairs was a crudely drawn skull and crossbones in red paint beneath which were the words “Danger! Keep out! Death to all who enter here!”

The upper part of the house was deserted, but the blood spattered liberally over the walls and floor bore mute witness to the fact that at least one person would have been well advised to have taken seriously the grim notice at the entrance.

Enquiry downstairs elicited the information that Ali, younger son of the owner of the house, was wont to use the unfurnished upper storey as a meeting-place for his friends.

Ali was not unknown to the police. He was in his early twenties, well over six feet in height and of enormous girth and strength—indeed, he was by far the biggest Arab I ever saw. He was well known locally as a bully and a braggart with strong homosexual tendencies. His father was a respected citizen and his brother was a capable lawyer, but Ali himself had never done a stroke of work in his life and was a constant source of worry to his family.

He was not at home when the police arrived, but the dead youth was quickly identified as Ahmed Suleiman el Sawafari, a well-known crony of Ali’s.

An all-station call was put out for Ali Siksik, but he had vanished into thin air. The investigation of the murder went on in his absence, and the statements of all available witnesses were recorded. A number of people had seen Ahmed and Ali together on the evening before the body had been found, and he had also been seen carrying a heavy sack during the early morning.

Now began a reign of terror in Jaffa and the surrounding area; on July 2nd Ali broke into a house in the Jebalieh Quarter, shot and killed the owner, who was one of the witnesses against him, and seriously wounded his brother.

A fortnight later, in the same quarter, he shot and wounded the mother of another of the witnesses against him.

By this time a self-imposed curfew had the normally popular cafes and the busy streets deserted from dusk until dawn. Every door and window was shuttered and barred, and little children lay quaking in their beds—the dread of Ali Siksik lurked in every shadow; every creak of a shutter and every snuffle of a pi-dog at a garbage can sent icy fingers of fear clutching at every heart.

Extra police were drafted into the area; extensive patrols and carefully-sited ambushes covered the town, but Ali eluded them all.

Then, on July 23rd, we heard the incredible news that he had been arrested in Samakh, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, over a hundred miles away, while trying to escape into Syria in a watermelon cart.

Under strong escort he was brought back to Jaffa and duly charged with the murder of Ahmed Suleiman el Sawafari on June 17th, and then transferred to the Central Prison in Jerusalem to await his trial.

At the end of September he was brought down to Jaffa for the hearing before the Examining Magistrate, and placed in the solitary confinement cells in the Jaffa lock-up.

On October 1st, using only one hacksaw blade and his bare hands, Ali cut his way through two steel bars on the gate of his cell and through a similar bar on the grill at the end of the passage, climbed up and over the high wall with its summit of broken glass and so regained his liberty. The warders ? Well, clearly they must have heard the sawing going on, but such was the almost supernatural dread which the name of Ali Siksik aroused in them that they must have been too terrified even to lift a finger to stop him. They were suitably dealt with, but the damage had been done.

The news of his escape was received with horror and dismay by

all the inhabitants; quickly the police in the area were reinforced, intensive patrols and ambushes were ordered, and a senior officer from Jerusalem was sent down to take charge of the operations and to stay on the job until the wanted man was re-arrested.

On November 7th, in spite of all police activity and precautions, yet another witness in the preliminary enquiry, one Taher Masherawi, was shot dead on his own doorstep in the presence of his wife, who recognised Ali Siksik as the murderer.

At the end of the year the senior officer went back to Jerusalem ; Ali was still at large, in spite of the fact that there was a substantial reward on his head.

On January 16th, two Arabs called at the C.I.D. offices in Jaffa asking to see me. I was away at the time, and in my absence they were seen by Constable Bob Jordan of the Arab Affairs Section, a fluent Arabic speaker.

They told Jordan that they had news of the whereabouts of Ali Siksik, enquired as to the amount of the reward offered for his apprehension, and asked whether they would be eligible to receive it if they brought in the necessary information.

On being assured on this point, they left, promising to get in touch with us as soon as the wanted man had been definitely located.

At 11.45 p.m. on January 18th, one of them 'phoned through to Jordan from Ben Shemen Police Post in Ramleh Division to say that he knew the house at which Ali was spending that night; if we would meet him at the Police Post he would guide us to the house in question.

On the departure of the senior officer from Jerusalem, John Fforde, the Assistant Superintendent in charge of Jaffa Division, had taken over the co-ordination of police activity in the Ali Siksik case; on receipt of Jordan's message—so that there should be no

duplication of operations—I 'phoned Fforde to inform him that I should be operating in the Ramleh area that night, and he said that he would like to come with me. I also 'phoned to Ramleh and told the Inspector there, Ernie Cooke, to meet me at Ben Shemen with a number of his uniformed policemen, and to bring some hand-grenades with him. At midnight I met John Fforde at my office and, with Jordan and a party of detectives, we set off for Ben Shemen. The agent was waiting, and he informed us that Ali Siksik was sleeping in a house in Beit Nabala, a couple of miles up the road.

We disembarked about a mile from the village and approached it quietly on foot, taking care not to disturb the dogs and set them barking. We crept up a lane towards the centre of the village, until our guide halted us with a gesture, and pointed out a doorway in the middle of a row of houses straight ahead of us. The door obviously led into the courtyard in front of a house, but when we tried it gently it was clearly barred from the inside.

An unlocked door to the right gave access to an adjacent courtyard and two or three of us climbed on to the dividing wall, dropped quietly down and opened the barred door to those of the party who had not been previously detailed to cover the rear and sides of the house.

There was one door leading into the house itself, and this, when we tried it, was also barred on the inside. We banged on the door and called upon the occupants to open it, and when we got no answer we forced it open.

The interior of the house was typical of many fellah houses in Palestine; just inside the doorway to the left a short flight of steps led up to the living quarters, the floor of which was some 5 feet above ground level. The space beneath this floor was used as a stable, and was full of goats, cows and donkeys.

The house was long and narrow, and halfway back from the door a low wall with an opening in the centre of it divided the

living space from the *tibbin* store behind.

Suspended inside the front wall above and to the right of the door was a tiny, feeble oil lamp which gave a fitful light only as far as the low dividing wall, beyond which it gave up the struggle, leaving the enveloping gloom to reign unchallenged.

On both sides of the long room stood high corn bins of various shapes and sizes, each adding its quota to the shadows.

As we burst open the door we saw a man and woman arise, startled, from the floor where they had been sleeping. We called to them, and as they came down towards us we noticed that there were three sleeping mats on the floor; there was no visible sign of a third occupant, but as we were about to brush past them in order to investigate further we heard a sound in the gloom within—which pulled us up with a jerk—the unmistakable click-clack of an automatic pistol being loaded. The goats and cows, excited by our activities, chose this crucial moment to disgorge from the stable below, milling out into the yard in a miniature stampede, which brought the man and woman running out to try to stop them getting out of the courtyard.

We grabbed them and started to question them about the identity of the third sleeper, but quickly gave up when we found that the man was a deaf mute and that the woman was a toothless crone whose senile brain proved incapable of understanding and answering a simple question.

Nevertheless, their demeanour, coupled with the sinister sound we had heard, left us in no doubt about the accuracy of our information.

The question was: how were we going to winkle our man out of this dark cavern of a house without suffering major casualties ourselves in the process? Unfortunately, we could not throw a grenade in to shake him up, because Ramleh police had forgotten to

bring any with them, and the last thing in the world I wanted to do at that moment was to go blundering into that upper room, silhouetted against what light there was, to meet almost certain death. We knew that Ali—or, at least, an armed man who refused to come out or even to answer when we called to him—was inside, but we didn't know whether he was lurking behind one of the corn bins or whether he was in the shadows of the distant *tibbin* store. We knew that if it was Ali he was a cold-blooded multi-murderer who would like nothing better than to take a few British police officers to perdition with him if he got the chance. And he was a good shot also, as the corpses of his earlier victims had testified.

John Fforde, Ernie Cooke and I held a hurried consultation beside the doorway. We didn't know whether there was a back door to the house through which our bird might try to escape, so, leaving Fforde and Cooke guarding the entrance, I made a quick tour of the row of houses, warning the men forming the cordon to be especially on the alert, as we had somebody—probably Ali—in the bag.

A quick recce of the rear of the house showed that there was no apparent means of escape there, and so, satisfied on that score, I returned to the front of the house. By the time I got there I had come to the conclusion that it would be necessary to send back to Jaffa for some tear smoke bombs, which would be the safest way to get our quarry out.

This decision was put out of my head by the look with which Jordan greeted me when I entered the courtyard.

"Where are Mr. Fforde and Inspector Cooke?" I asked, surprised that they were not where I had left them a moment or two before. His reply shattered me.

"They've gone inside"" he said. And so they had. I looked in, along the floor which was just below my eye-level, and there they were crouching down like a couple of monkeys against the wall dividing the living quarters from the *tibbin* store. Fforde was near

the side wall, with Cooke in front of him nearer the middle of the room and there was just room for another one to crouch down between Cooke and the centre opening in the low wall. So much for my policy of not taking unnecessary risks. Fforde and Cooke had got in so far without being killed, though I couldn't think why. I had no hope of being equally lucky, I thought, and even if I did manage to join them without a lump of hot lead tearing into my solar plexus, where did we go from there? Obviously they were no nearer locating their quarry than they had been outside.

My mouth was dry with fear at the thought of entering that room, but I think I was almost more afraid of what might happen if I didn't. In far less time than it takes to tell the decision was taken; in I went and then there were three monkeys crouching against the low wall.

As I took my place I whispered to Ernie Cooke, "Where is he?" and got the answer, "He's in the tibbin somewhere."

I had my automatic pistol in my right hand and my torch in my left, and I found that by leaning forward along the wall I could poke my head and my gun round the corner of the opening in the middle and get a glimpse into the *tibbin* store. I should have liked to shine my torch in, but I felt that to do so would mean exposing the whole of my body, and the light would certainly draw his fire to me.

I poked my head round and as I did so lost my balance and had to put my right hand with the gun in it down on the floor in order to stop myself stumbling forward on to my face.

As my hand went down and my head went forward beyond the shelter of the wall a huge face came round from the other side of the wall directly opposite mine, and there, for a split second, were Ali Siksik and I, with our noses not six inches apart, staring into each other's eyes. I don't know who was the more surprised, but I do know my heart stood still. And then things happened quickly.

I shouted out, “He’s behind the wall!” and Ernie Cooke pushed a black wooden box which had been balanced on the wall over on the top of him. I recovered my balance and jumped up just as Ali also jumped up right opposite me. I saw the gun in his hand come up and point at my stomach, and I brought my own gun up and pulled the trigger. There was a click. For the first time in its life my automatic had misfired—just when I needed it as never before. It was followed by another click as Ali’s automatic also misfired. Frantically I pulled back the breech of my gun, let it go and pulled the trigger again twice as Ali was doing the same with his. My two bullets hit him squarely in the chest, the first on the right and the second through the heart; even as my first bullet hit him his own gun fired, but the bullet went wide. As he spun round, Cooke and Fforde both fired and Ali Siksik was dead before he hit the ground.

In his short reign he had killed four people and seriously wounded two others; why he had not succeeded in adding at least two senior police officers to his bag I shall never know.

Chapter 20

STERN GANG IN ACTION

Life for those of us who were dealing with Jewish illegal/ armed organisations became more difficult as the war progressed.

The thirst for arms and military equipment developed almost into a mania with Hagana, the Irgun and the Stern Gang alike; Hagana attempted to defend its actions in this respect by claiming that the weapons they acquired were vital for the protection of the Jewish colonies. The other two organisations made no secret of the fact that they were wanted for use against what they were pleased to call the British suppressors.

After the fall of France Stern was known to have sent an envoy to the Italian Military Mission operating in Syria to offer the assistance of his organisation when the Axis forces attacked Palestine if, in return, they would promise to make him the head of the puppet Palestine Government!

Unfortunately for Stern, the British attacked the Vichy French and conquered Syria and the Lebanon instead, so the opportunity for him to exercise his powers of statesmanship never arose. Nevertheless, it was difficult to see on what grounds he, as a Jew, thought that he would be better off under the rule of the people who had virtually decimated his own race in Germany.

While Hagana did not go to these lengths, nor, I am sure, approve of them, its leaders were not backward in devising ways and means of defeating the police in their efforts to seize firearms. The following is a translation of widely-circulated instructions on how to outwit the police and prevent them from carrying out their

duty.

I quote it in full, just as it was translated from the Hebrew by one of my Jewish policemen, for I believe it can show far better than any words of mine just what we were up against:

"Instructions Regarding Searches and Arrest

"Search 1. You must ask for a warrant of search signed by a Majistrate. A Majistrate includes a District Commissioner and a District Officer. A Majistrate may make a search himself without a warrant.

"2. The warrant of search should have on it the place to be searched, the name of the person or of the house to be searched, and the nature of the article for which search is to be made.

"3. You must note the name of the person to whom the warrant is to be issued and if the person or persons intending to make the search are mentioned in the warrant.

"4. Witnesses. The *mukhtar* or two prominent citizens must be present. (If a policeman comes alone do not allow him to search.) This does not apply in time of emergency.

"5. A foreign national is entitled to ask to see the warrant of search, which must be signed by a British Majistrate.

"6. Women may be searched by women only.

"The Meaning of Detention, i.e. Delay

"The aim is to delay the searchers to enable you to arrange anything that it is necessary to arrange and should be done by a person to be searched or by a woman. Of course, all of the above instructions will be most successful if you talk politely and quietly. Conversation can take place whilst the door is still locked or whilst you are looking for the key, or whilst dressing. The best idea is to arrange it so that the searcher hears the voice of a woman saying, 'I

am not dressed.' You may also use this trick when the searchers are already in the house, in order to delay entry to any room.

"The Trick of Keeping the Child Quiet

"Hurt the child so that it will cry and then ask the searchers to wait whilst you quieten the child which has been frightened by them.

"Incompetent Witnesses

"You may say that the witness accompanying the searcher is not a respectable citizen. He is suspected of being a police agent, he is an enemy of mine, his wife has a quarrel with my wife, and so on.

"Hiding Articles

"1. When one of the police goes to fetch witnesses or to change a witness you may arrange anything necessary. If you are successful and are left alone with only one Policeman and no witnesses you may even put the article near him and say, 'You brought that with you.'

"2. When you throw an article or two in different directions and people go to look for it you are left alone and you may hide other things. Sometimes it is the policy to throw away the revolver or similar article together with another article, and if it is found you may say, 'I threw away that article, but I did not throw away the revolver.' It must be borne in mind that the searchers must find the article in the presence of the witnesses. You must try not to be near the articles if they are found.

"Signalling to the Witnesses

"You may signal to the witnesses that they should place themselves so that they cannot see anything. You can then argue, 'I did not see you find anything here, and I want that fact written down in the search report.' You may argue that the Police have

planted the article if you are sure that the witness or witnesses are on your side.

"The Writing of a Search Report

"Suggest that it be written in ink; see that all the details are accurately written down. According to law, you may require a copy of a search report; therefore see that the report is written in ink and no copy is made, and when the report is finished and you read it over try to add words; later, ask for a clean copy. In this way, when you go to court you may show that your copy is different from the police copy. This will work when you have the sympathy of the witnesses and they are asked to initial all the alterations.

"Act politely all the time and don't annoy the Police; if you annoy them they will do things that will not comply with the law.

"When a number of persons are caught together in suspicious circumstances, they should arrange that the story that each tells should be a probable one.

"Alibis

"Making the firearms unserviceable. Take out the firing pin and hide it in a safe place.

"Resistance

"Every form of resistance must be considered on its own merits, and you must know the position of every member of the other side. The plan of resistance must be prepared beforehand. In every case it is a good idea to extinguish the light.

"In the Police Station

"Keep quiet and say, 'I will speak in Court.' The law allows you to say that. Don't give your name and address. If the arrested person feels that his house contains incriminating evidence it is better not to give the address. In this case he will be detained until

he gives his name and address. The arrested person must inform as soon as possible by any means that his premises are not in order, and as soon as he thinks that his premises have been arranged for him he may give his name and address to the Police, and he may say as an excuse that he had a woman in his room and he did not want to inconvenience her.

"Information

"All information must be delivered to the necessary place immediately.

"In the street make a noise and then escape.

"Hand over the article to the Police and shout, 'It is not mine.'

"Assist your friends. ..."

The following "Regulations" were made for a place in Tel Aviv where Hagana carried out training with its illegal firearms. Again I quote them in full, for they give a good picture of the degree of thoroughness and organisation which existed. The abbreviations M.Z., M.M., S.M.Z., and M.R. refer to various ranks within the organisation, of which obviously M.R. (*Mefaked Roshi*—head commander) was the boss:

"Regulations

"The Commander is responsible to the M.R. (Mefaked Roshi—Chief Commander) for all precautions. He is responsible that all arrangements are executed as mentioned below. The M.Z. arranges periods between the M.M. and is responsible that each one of them is aware of the duty he is to perform and that he performs it loyally. The M.Z. should learn from practice and from his mistakes and suggest improvements. The S.M.Z. is responsible for the order, precautions and security of the place. He must also learn and propose improvements to the M.Z.

“The S.M.Z. is responsible for the articles and for arranging mats. He is responsible that the special gun shall be in its proper place and that all doors and gates are locked, that the main entrance is locked with a padlock and chain and all keys of important gates and doors should be in his charge. The S.M.Z. should check the guard not less than four times and see that they understand the signals and arrangements for an alarm and that they perform their duties correctly.

“Instructions to members:

“(1) Everyone should appear at the place to which he is sent at 7 o’clock exactly.

“(2) It is forbidden to smoke during working hours.

“(3) The watchmen should not admit anyone who does not give the special sign.

“(4) The guard must see that persons entering or leaving are not allowed to smoke.

“(5) The guard must not allow bicycles to be taken in.

“(6) If the guard notices any suspicious persons he should signal (*beshuv* H.) so that people should not enter the place, and everyone should go in a different direction.

“(7) The guard must fix for himself a position from which he can see and hear everything without being noticed.

“(8) The guard should not leave his post. He shall take his orders from the person who placed him only.

“(9) Two guards may not be together in one place (except when they have special instructions to the contrary).

“(10) The guard should see that persons enter and leave the place quietly and not more than two at a time.

"(11) The guard must remain after the lesson and see that everything has been left in order.

"(12) The guard is dismissed by the S.M.Z.

"(13) If a member does not obey the instruction of the guard the latter must report his name and group to the S.M.Z. or M.Z.

"(14) Should the guard notice any suspicious persons watching him he should whistle that he is leaving his position and that the S.M.Z. should go out and act accordingly to the requirements of the situation.

"(15) The guard must remember the numbers of Police and cars passing in the vicinity of his post.

"(16) In the event of a search, the guard must inform the meeting as to which side the search party is arriving.

"Instruction in the Event of a Suspicion or Alarm"

"*Suspicion.* The signal—one ring. The main entrances and other doors are closed. Lower the voice. The S.M.Z. will go outside and see from where the danger comes. The door guard is in contact with other guards. When the suspicion is over give two rings.

"*Alarm.* Signal short rings in quick succession. Two or three men previously detailed will gather all arms and arrange the premises. The rest will prepare excuses and, if the situation allows, clear out as soon as possible. . . ."

The Stern Gang, in the meantime, were becoming more active. We knew that they were obtaining large sums of money by blackmail, kidnapping, robbery and extortion, but, largely through fear of consequences, most of their victims never reported their activities to the police.

On the morning of January 9th, 1942, however, things were brought to a head by the shooting in Tel Aviv of two young Jews

named Matitiahu Friedman and Abraham ben Abraham.

At a few minutes to nine on that morning the cashier of a big co-operative society in Tel Aviv was waiting at a bus stop with a satchel under his arm containing £1,093, which he had just drawn from Hapoelim Bank in Montefiore Street. Two young men—members of the Stern Gang—came up behind him, hit him on the head with an iron pipe covered in rubber, grabbed the satchel and were off down the street with it like the wind. By an error of judgment of a type of which they were not usually guilty, the blow they gave the luckless cashier with their murderous weapon was not as effective as it was obviously intended to be, for he was able to shake off its immediate effects and raise a hue and cry.

As they ran down the street followed at some distance by their victim shouting "Robbery! Pursue them! Catch them!" the assailants were joined by a third man. The chase progressed for some distance, and one of the three men made good his escape. As the satchel containing the money was not seen again, it is presumed that he took it with him, though it was never established whether he was one of the two original assailants or not.

The remaining two men, now with revolvers in their hands, separated and were eventually cornered by police and civilians some distance apart. One of them, Nissim Reuven, who had fired several shots in the air to deter his pursuers, then threw down his revolver and surrendered, saying, "Enough!" But the second man, Yehoshua Becker, exchanged shots with the British constable who had cornered him, as a result of which Matitiahu Friedman and Abraham ben Abraham, two innocent passers-by, met their deaths.

The investigation of this case was carried out by Inspector Wilkin and, because of the difficulties inherent in getting members of the public to give evidence against gangsters of this kind, the first thing we had to do was to collect up all our witnesses and keep them until the trial in a place where they could not be got at and intimidated.

The prospect of two of his henchmen standing trial on a capital charge must have come as a rude shock to Abraham Stern, particularly as the offence could not, by any stretch of the imagination, be described as either patriotic or political.

In addition, the Jewish Press condemned the incident with less timidity than was usual in such cases, and, to make matters worse, he could not locate the witnesses to silence them.

He therefore decided that the time had come to give the Jewish public—and the police—a sharp warning of what they were up against.

At that time Tel Aviv Police Division was commanded by the most senior Jewish officer in the force—a Deputy Superintendent named Solomon Schiff, who had earned, by his own example, the affection and respect of all the police, both British and Jewish, under his command. He was a fearless and loyal officer, and the fact that he was also a Jew made his job even harder than it would otherwise have been. He had been made a Member of the Order of the British Empire for his services in the Force.

On the morning of January 20th, 1942, ten days after the robbery with violence I have just described, Schiff rang me up to say that he had received a report from a member of the public to the effect that there had been two explosions in a room on the roof of a house at 8 Yael Street, Tel Aviv. Could I go along there with him to see what it was all about?

The Yale Street Incident: The assassin's view of the scene.

As it happened, the weekly Area Security Meeting, attended by the District Commissioner, the Brigade Commander and his Staff Officer, was then in progress in my office. I felt that I could not very well walk out and leave them, and the matter did not seem urgent enough to warrant breaking up the meeting. I therefore told Schiff that I would be along as soon as I could, suggesting that he should go ahead without me.

Fifteen minutes later, just as the meeting was breaking up and I was preparing to go to Yael Street to join Schiff, my 'phone rang again, and I was told that he was dead and that three of his inspectors were gravely injured.

The Yale Street Incident: Debris from the explosion in the courtyard below.

I went at once to the scene with a party of detectives, and I quote below notes I made at the time on our investigations into the incident:

> “At approximately 9 a.m. on 20.1.42 an explosion

occurred in a small room on the roof of No. 8 Yael Street, Tel Aviv. Some five minutes later a further small explosion occurred.

"The occupants, thinking that an air raid was in progress, went to the air raid shelter, and they were then informed by the people in the street that smoke was coming from the windows of the small room on the roof. A police constable, who was in the vicinity, went to the house and upon his request the landlady locked the door leading on to the roof and handed him the key.

"At about 9.30 a.m. Inspectors Turton and Dichter with a party of police arrived at the house and started investigations. The landlady was interrogated, but before any further action was taken Mr. Schiff and Inspector Goldman arrived on the scene. The whole party then proceeded to the roof, where the door of the small room in which the explosion had taken place was tried and found to be locked.

"Mr. Schiff then instructed that the door be forced open and when this was done he entered the room followed by Inspector Goldman, Inspector Turton and Inspector Dichter. When Inspector Dichter entered the doorway there was a violent explosion and all four walls of the room, which were of concrete blocks, were blown completely away and the roof of reinforced concrete collapsed.

"Mr. Schiff was blown through the wall and landed in the garden below and died instantly. A bedding mattress in the room landed beside him and the rest of the furniture was blown to pieces. Inspectors Turton and Goldman were trapped by the fallen roof, and Inspector Dichter was blown across the roof, where the parapet saved him from a similar fate to that of Mr. Schiff. The two Palestinian constables who accompanied the party on to the roof, but had not

entered the room, received minor injuries.

"The Superintendent and a party of C.I.D. personnel proceeded immediately to the scene, and investigations were instituted.

"It was observed that what appeared to be a wireless aerial was stretched from a pole above the door leading on to the roof of No. 8 Yael Street to a similar pole on the roof of a neighbouring house, No. 13 Dr. Zamanhoff Street.

"On further investigation it was found that this supposed aerial consisted of two thin wires which, although tied round two insulators of the usual aerial type, in fact continued unbroken down the pole, where they ended abruptly where the door of the small room had been.

"Inspection of the roof of No. 13 Dr. Zamanhoff Street revealed that the insulators at that end were also by-passed and that the wires were attached at the bottom of the pole to a common electric two-point socket.

"The roof of Dr. Zamanhoff Street is considerably higher than that of No. 8 Yael Street, and a man standing beside the electric socket has full vision of the door leading on to the roof of No. 8 Yael Street and of the door to the small room in which the explosion took place.

"The entrance to No. 8 Yael Street is at the side of the house and is connected with the main road by a narrow path which is bordered by a flower bed about 30 cm. wide. To enter this house it is necessary to walk along the path within a distance of a few centimetres of this flower bed.

"During investigations at the scene of the explosion it was observed that two wires were leading from the end of the flower bed, which is within 1 metre of the entrance to the house. These wires were followed away from the flower

bed and were found to cross the boundary fence into No. 10 Yael Street, and eventually led up the side of a water-pipe on to the roof of that building. Here it terminated in an electric socket similar to that on the roof of No. 13 Dr. Zamanhoff Street.

"A further search of the roof of No. 10 Yael Street brought to light three electric batteries wired together in circuit. They were connected to a plug to fit the socket attached to the wire leading from the flower bed and were also attached to a bell push. The wires entering the flower bed were subsequently investigated and found to enter a large triangular tin which contained 29 sticks of gelignite and several pounds of iron rivets and three electric detonators to which wires were attached.

"A person standing beside the socket on the roof of No. 10 Yael Street would be in a position to command an excellent view of the outer wall of the small room and also the entrance to No. 8 Yael Street, and, of course, the flower bed where the mine was buried.

"Persons living in both No. 10 Yael Street and No. 13 Dr. Zamanhoff Street rushed on to the roof at the sound of the third and final explosion. On each roof a man was standing at the point where the wires terminated in a socket. These men informed the people that an explosion had taken place and that the police were on the scene. The man on the roof of No. 10 Yael Street warned the people to keep away, as there might be another explosion. It was observed that this man was holding something in his hand which he took pains to conceal from the occupants of the house.

"There can be no doubt whatever that this outrage was deliberately planned and executed with the intention of killing some senior police officers. It is difficult to believe

that it was intended for any one particular person, but it would appear that the intent was to intimidate the police and terrorise the public in order that no future action should be taken against the gang who perpetrated it nor justice done to those of them who are already in custody.

"Inspector Goldman died of his injuries at 5.30 a.m. on 21.1.42. . . ."

An emergency operation was performed on Inspector Turton soon after his admission to hospital, and both his legs were amputated. He died about a week later.

It was a quirk of Fate, it seemed to me, that he should have been the officer who some time previously had been awarded the King's Police Medal for Gallantry for defending single-handed a trainload of Jews from a determined attack by a strong armed Arab gang, thereby saving their lives.

This was Turton's very first day of duty in Tel Aviv and his first day's duty in a predominantly Jewish area.

Chapter 21

RETRIBUTION

Reports which were received and, indeed, pamphlets published by the Gang itself, soon confirmed our suspicion that the Yael Street outrage was the work of the Stern Gang.

It was planned and carried out for the express purpose of saving Reuven and Becker from the consequences of the offence for which they had been arrested; Stern felt that he could thereby terrify the Jewish witnesses and thus prevent them giving evidence against his underlings, and he hoped also that the murder of their officers would result in a deterioration in the morale of the Jewish members of the Forces. To this end he also ordered the assassination of one of my Jewish detectives, Constable Soffioff, who was shot down in the main street of Rehovoth on November 16th, 1941, in the presence of his wife and young child, with whom he was out for a walk. We had no doubt as to the responsibility of the Stern Gang for this particular murder, for the assassin was seen and recognised as one Zelik Zak, a known member of the Gang, who had escaped from police custody a few weeks before.

Zelik Zak

The whole police force was at first stunned by the death of Schiff, Turton and Goldman, but we quickly got our breath back and the hunt was up with a vengeance.

For the first time the Government took Abraham Stern seriously, thereafter referring to his set-up as the Stern Gang instead of the

Stern Group. A reward of £2,000 was offered for information leading to the apprehension of the persons responsible for the Yael Street explosion, and a further £1,000 for the apprehension of Stern himself.

At 3.30 p.m. on January 27th, exactly a week after Schiff's death, die information we wanted came in. I learned from a Jewish source that on the day of the explosion four young men had hired a room in a flat on the third floor of an apartment house at 30 Dizengoff Street, Tel Aviv. My informant went on to say that the four of them had remained in this room ever since with the door locked, being visited only at night by other suspicious characters.

There was no positive information to connect them with the Stern Gang, but the circumstances were so unusual that I felt sure (for once) that this was what we were looking for. The interest shown by my informer in the reward money left me in no doubt as to his own opinion of the identity of the men, and finally dispelled my suspicions that this might be another booby trap to secure the demise of more policemen.

I decided that there was no alternative but to go and investigate in person and without delay. Any elaborate police activity might have resulted in the escape of the men and would certainly have brought half Tel Aviv to the scene to watch and to hinder.

And, of course, it might well be that when we got there the four men might have some perfectly reasonable and satisfactory explanation for their presence.

I must admit quite frankly that I did not relish my task one little bit; Stern had proclaimed on many occasions that he and his followers would never be captured alive, but would blow themselves up, taking as many policemen as possible with them.

The locked door also presented some difficulty; it precluded the possibility of taking the occupants by surprise, for (always

providing they did not open it when we knocked, which didn't seem very likely), it would take time to break it down or shoot off the lock.

There were not many detectives in the offices when the information came in, but I mustered all those who could be spared and set off with them for 30 Dizengoff Street.

Leaving three men to form a skeleton cordon round the building, I mounted to the top floor, closely followed by Sergeants "Busty" Woodward and "Happy" Day, and rang the bell on the door of the flat on the right.

After a moment's delay the door was opened by a woman who was apparently expecting to see an acquaintance, for there was a smile on her face and her mouth was opening to speak —until she saw who was there. Although we were in plain clothes, she obviously recognised us as policemen and knew what we had come for. The smile froze, her jaw dropped, her eyes nearly popped out of her head, and an instant later she turned and fled down the corridor behind her into a room at the far end.

The door of the room in which we were interested was, I knew, the first on the left immediately inside the front door of the flat.

I drew the gun from the pocket of my raincoat and, with my left hand, gently turned the handle of the door. To my surprise, it gave under my grasp. I pushed it wide open and stepped inside. Lying on a bed right opposite me, with his hands clasped behind his head, was Zelik Zak, the man who had murdered Constable Soffioff. On another bed to the left two more men were reclining, and one of them I recognised immediately as Moshe Zvorai, a man for whom we had been looking for a long time. The third was unknown to me.

For one petrified second we stared at each other, and then, as I said sharply *"Al-ta'amod!"* (Don't stand up!) all three of them were galvanised into action. The stranger made a grab at a coat which

was lying on a stool between the two beds, and the other two sprang up and started towards me. I opened fire and wounded all three of them. As I replaced the clip in my automatic pistol there was a sound of shooting outside the building. It transpired that just before our arrival the fourth man in the room had unlocked the door and gone across the passage into the lavatory. The ring of the doorbell, followed by the shooting, had told him all too clearly that the police had caught up with them and he had, therefore, got out of the lavatory window and started to climb down a vine which grew up the side of the house. He was seen by Alec Ternent, a young detective constable whom I had detailed to stay in the garden below.

Ternent called up to him several times to stop and go back and, when he continued to descend, shot and wounded him in the rump. When I went down to investigate I recognised him as Yaacov Levstein, a man whom we were also very anxious to meet. When he saw me he treated me to a stream of abuse and foul language—in English—which would have been a credit to a Billingsgate fish porter. Thereafter he refused to speak or understand any language but Hebrew.

Undoubtedly the fact that he had gone to the lavatory and left the door of the room unlocked had enabled us to take his companions by surprise and had prevented them from carrying out their threat to blow up the whole lot of us.

In the pocket of the coat on the stool was a fully-loaded automatic pistol; in the drawer of the table under the window were two fully-primed hand grenades, a length of fuse, a quantity of literature on grenades, explosives and small arms, some electric batteries and some Fascist badges.

As soon as we could get an ambulance from Jaffa they were all transferred to the prison ward of the Jaffa Government Hospital, where Zelik Zak and the third man in the room, who had since been identified as one Haim Amper, died of their wounds.

Haim Amper, shot at 30 Dizengoff Street, Tel Aviv (together with Zelik Zak)

Moshe Zvorai and Yaacov Levstein made a good recovery, and in about a fortnight were fit to be transferred from the hospital to the prison; before this transfer took place, however, they were to provide us with the clue for which the whole police force was searching.

In charge of the guard on the prisoners was a certain Sergeant, an Irishman whom I had known well when we were constables together in Mount Scopus. He had been the camp bugler, and many a time I had watched with amusement when, on one elbow, he had blown perfectly the morning Reveille in the general direction of an open window without getting out of bed.

His job, which was considered a sinecure, came to an abrupt end when one day, in a blaze of Irish temper, he threw his bugle at the Depot Inspector, a personage of considerable standing, hitting him fairly and squarely in the chest.

He had come a long way since then, and had meanwhile collected a particularly good B.E.M. for jumping from a station platform to rescue somebody who had fallen on to the railway line in front of an oncoming train.

My Irish friend came to me a few days after the Dizengoff Street gang were put in his charge and said that, if I was interested, he thought he could get into the confidence of his prisoners and obtain some useful information. I told him to go ahead and promised every assistance.

Before long he was running errands for Moshe Zvorai and Yaacov Levstein, smuggling in to them forbidden cigarettes and other luxuries.

The day before they were due to be transferred to the prison to await their trial trie Sergeant pointed out that they would need some clean clothes—those in which they had been captured were caked with blood, and they would not want to don the uniform normally worn by convicted prisoners.

After some hesitation, Yaacov Levstein wrote a note to his mother asking her to bring him some clean clothes down to the hospital the next morning. He asked her also to buy a book as a present for the Sergeant who would bring the note.

Moshe Zvorai at first refused to take any similar steps, but eventually agreed to add a note for his wife to the bottom of Levstein's letter to his mother. He said that Mrs. Levstein would know how to get in touch with his wife.

The Sergeant got away as soon as he could and brought the notes to my office. Zvorai's was written in an obscure Russian dialect in Hebrew characters and was very difficult to translate. After some delay, I got an agent in Tel Aviv to do it for me, for I felt this was not a matter in which to implicate my Jewish detectives.

We knew all about Levstein's mother; she was harmless and did not approve of her son's activities, though she would obviously do what she could to help him in his troubles. We were, on the other hand, very anxious to get our hands on Mrs. Zvorai. The note addressed to her was most interesting: among other things it told her to "consult with our guest".

The Sergeant, now in plain clothes, duly arrived at Mrs. Levstein's house and waited while she read the notes.

She looked perplexed and confessed that she had no idea how to contact Mrs. Zvorai. The Sergeant told her to come down to the hospital with her son's clothes first thing in the morning and he would try and arrange for her to have a word with Zvorai.

We watched the house all night to see whether she had told the truth, or whether in fact she did contact anybody outside: she stayed at home and had no visitors.

The next morning she arrived at the Jaffa Hospital and was allowed to see her son for a moment. Zvorai was in the same room, and he whispered to her "8 Mizrachi B Street—on the roof!" But the Sergeant outside the door heard that whisper, and while Mrs. Levstein was waiting for the bus to go to 8 Mizrachi B Street he got in his little car and came posthaste to my office.

The police got to 8 Mizrachi B Street, and to the apartment on

the roof, before Mrs. Levstein.

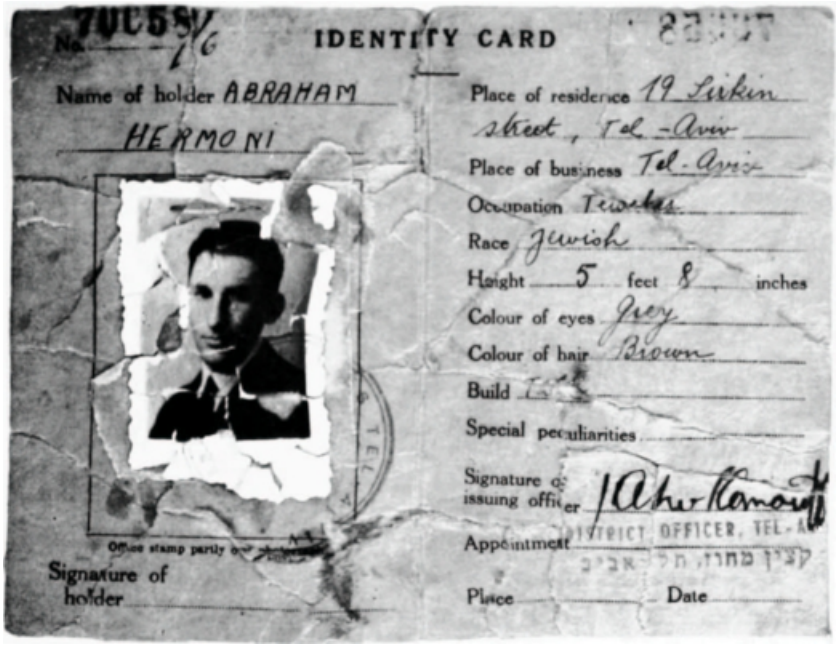
Mrs. Zvorai was there, and so, too, was the “guest”— Abraham Stern himself. This tough gangleader, master-mind of terrorism, organiser of mass murder and of assassinations by the dozen, arch-enemy of Britain and the war effort, this would-be Quisling, was found hiding in the wardrobe under the petticoats of his hostess.

He was taken out and, while he was bending down to tie his shoelaces prior to being taken to Headquarters, he suddenly dived under the gun of the policeman who was covering him and made a mad rush towards the open window leading on to the flat roof. Although, as far as we knew, Stern had in the past directed the activities of his Gang only from a safe distance, leaving his subordinates to do the actual dirty work on his behalf, I had no reason to disbelieve his oft-repeated threat to blow up himself and his captors at the same time if he were ever cornered to be an idle boast. The elaborate arrangements made at 8 Yael Street were an example of what they were capable of doing in this direction.

Stern could not possibly have got away, for the house was surrounded and he knew it. What, then, was his object? I could only conclude that he had some infernal machine rigged up and that he was making a desperate attempt to reach it.

None of the police in the room could get to the window before him, so, in order to prevent another shambles, I shot him dead.

We did not find a hidden bomb, but that doesn’t mean to say that there wasn’t one. In fact, we did not look too closely, for without knowing its secret we might well have achieved the very effect we were trying to avoid.



Abraham Stern's Indentity Card, found torn up in the flat at 8, Mizrachi B Street. Hermoni was one of his aliases.

In due course inquests were held on Stern and on the two men who died as a result of wounds received at 30 Dizengoff Street, and verdicts of justifiable homicide were returned in each case.

I received many letters from all sorts of people as a result of these incidents, but perhaps one of the most interesting, in the light of subsequent events, was one written by Glubb Pasha on February 22nd, 1942, to our Inspector-General, who sent me a copy.

The reward offered for the apprehension of the Yael Street murderers was duly paid out to the person who had given the information, but because of the fact that two of our prisoners had provided, albeit through carelessness, the information leading to Stern's death, the £1,000 on his head was not claimed or paid.

Levstein and Zvorai were both sentenced to long terms of imprisonment by the Military Court for possession of the revolver and grenades, but Levstein subsequently escaped from the custody

of the prison authorities.

Chapter 22

ESCAPE FROM ASSASSINATION

THE first that my wife knew about the incident in Mizrachi B Street was when, within the hour, an armed party arrived to guard our house in Sarona. From then on for the rest of our stay in the Lydda District this guard was maintained day and night without a break. On instructions from higher authority, I never went anywhere, either on or off duty, without a bodyguard of at least two armed detectives. This thankless task was taken on voluntarily by Sergeant Alec Stuart, Sergeant Alec Shand (who held the King's Police Medal for Gallantry) and Constable Alec Ternent; to these three Alecs I shall always owe a great debt of gratitude. I was never put in the embarrassing position of having to ask for an escort, let alone to detail one—they were always there, unobtrusive but ready to go anywhere at any time of the day or night and to tackle any job. They virtually became members of the family, and on the rare occasions when we went to a cinema, or out for a walk on the Tel Aviv sea-front, two of them invariably went with us.

There seemed to be little doubt as to the necessity for these precautions, for reports from all quarters indicated that I was now No.1 on the Stern Gang assassination list.

We continued our efforts to clean up the remnants of the gang and, under Wilkie's expert guidance, many of the lesser lights were interned under the Defence Regulations.

On March 6th, 1942, Becker was found guilty of murder by the Court of Criminal Assize and sentenced to death; Rcuven was found not guilty of murder by the same Court, but was convicted of robbery and sentenced to fourteen years' imprisonment.

In the Court of Criminal Appeal on March 28th the convictions were upheld and the sentences confirmed; it was no small achievement on Wilkie's part to have carried out the investigation of this case and brought the witnesses safely to court without them having been intimidated in the interval. It seemed to us certain that Becker would pay the full penalty of the law for a clear case of murder, as many Arabs had done during the preceding years. To my surprise, however, in spite of the verdicts of the two most senior Courts of the country, the Jewish population was completely confident that he would not be executed.

So strong was this prediction that I made it the subject of a special report to Jerusalem. I was promptly told that I was talking nonsense. I hoped I was, for I could think of no action which would be more calculated to boost the morale of the terrorists and to lower the morale of the police and the lawabiding public. The penalty for illegal possession of firearms was life imprisonment, so that if Becker were reprieved any gangster cornered in possession of a firearm would have every incentive to try to shoot his way out—he would not thereby incur a greater penalty and might well succeed in escaping altogether.

Knowing that I was making myself thoroughly unpopular in high quarters by doing so, I commented at length on this aspect of the matter in my next intelligence summary.

It made no difference—in due course Becker was reprieved without any official explanation as to why this was done, and those terrorists who were not already in the bag took on a new lease of life.

I was never able to understand the attitude of the Jewish civic authorities nor, indeed, of the majority of the Jewish public in this matter. Here was a young thug—one of a gang which had been terrorising the Jewish inhabitants of Tel Aviv for months—who had been caught in the act of robbing a fellow Jew of a large sum of money and who had killed two perfectly innocent Jewish passers-by

when trying to shoot his way out.

He had been given a fair trial and his appeal had been carefully heard. Yet when he was given the sentence appropriate to his crime he promptly ceased to be a murderous villain and became something of a national hero—a Jew about to be done to death by Gentiles. If he had been found guilty of murdering an Arab or a British policeman I could have understood, even if I could not condone, this attitude, but by no possible stretch of the imagination could the crime for which he was convicted be construed as the act of a patriot fighting for his people or his country.

The objection could not have been on the grounds of general opposition to the death penalty, for dozens of Arabs had been executed for similar offences without so much as a word of protest from the Jewish authorities.

Perhaps it was an instinctive reaction, brought about by centuries of persecution at the hands of the non-Jew. What pressure was brought to bear to secure this reprieve will probably never be known; it must have been applied in the highest possible quarters at home, for I am sure that the Palestine administration, vacillating and weak as it often was, would never willingly have agreed to this significant discrimination between the two races.

* * *

On my way in from Sarona to my office I had to pass an orange grove surrounded by a stone wall on the outskirts of Tel Aviv. Just after the Reuven and Becker trial a sharp-eyed police patrol noticed that the cement surrounding one of the big stones which formed the wall had been carefully chipped out and that the stone could now be quickly removed from inside the wall. The implications of this were pretty sinister, so the spot was ambushed; before long a young Jew—a member of the Stern gang—was caught making his way towards the entrance to the orange grove, carrying a sub-machine

gun in a parcel. From then on this road was patrolled regularly before I passed along it and the terrorists had to think out some other method of catching up with me.

On May 1st I got in my car to drive to my office. My wife, who was then teaching at the Jaffa High School for Girls, sat beside me; Sergeants Stuart and Shand were in the back seat, tommy-guns across their knees. As we drove towards Tel Aviv a land-mine, remote-controlled from an orange tree some 200 yards away, blew up beneath us, wrecking the car and covering us with dirt and glass fragments. Apart from concussion, by some miracle we all escaped injury. To me the actual blast of the explosion had appeared out of proportion to its noise, which had not seemed unduly loud. I learned later that it had in fact been loud enough to send everybody scampering for the air-raid shelters in Jaffa, three miles away. The land-mine, which had consisted (as we heard afterwards) of sixty sticks of gelignite and two socks full of iron rivets all firmly tamped into a length of drainpipe, had been inserted into the road from the bank at the side, so that there was no suspicious disturbance of the surface tarmac.

We got other transport into Jaffa where, after I had cleaned her up a bit, my wife taught all the morning with a splitting headache.

Perhaps the thing which interested me most about this incident was the fact that, as I learned a few days later, two further land-mines had been buried in the cemetery for the purpose of blowing up our funeral cortege. They would have got a good bag there, for, had the original plan succeeded, it would surely have been a popular and well-attended function!

We received many letters of warm congratulation from all sections of the community after our escape, including some from Jews whom I had never met. Clearly there were somemembers of the public who supported our efforts to wipe out terrorism, but equally clearly they would never dare to come out into the open to say so.

One of the letters I received came from a man who, although I had never met him, I knew to be held in high esteem in professional circles in Tel Aviv. I like to think that his sentiments were better than his English. His letter read:

> "I beg to address myself to you as an unknown person. I write this letter in order to express my horrible feelings about the last attentats and to send you my best congratulations for your's and your wife's saving.
>
> "I hope you will succeed in putting an end with this terrible attentats. ..."

I suspect that his feelings weren't half as horrible as my wife's or mine when we saw our car disintegrating around us, but nevertheless we appreciated the fact that he had even dared to write.

I found the reactions of my friends and acquaintances outside the police force most intriguing. I sometimes caught them looking at me as though I were already dead, and I do not think any of them would have given a button for my chances of getting out of the country alive. Even our closest friends jokingly but firmly declined proffered lifts in our car, and after a while I stopped asking them. I do not blame them for this, let me add—it was sound common sense where they were concerned—but the matter-of-fact way in which the three Alecs carried out their self-imposed duties rather tended to minimise for us the danger we were in.

The Arab reaction to the attack on us was amusing. The day after details of it were published in the Press a couple of dozen Arabs arrived at my house from Jenin, demanding that they be allowed to constitute themselves my bodyguard. They brought with them as a token of goodwill a young gazelle, which they put down on the floor of our living-room. The poor animal tried to run under a table, but it was quite unable to gain a footing on the polished tiles, and its spindly legs splayed out in all directions. Hastily I

gathered it in my arms and tethered it outside. Within a week it was running loose in the garden, perfectly tame, and taking food from our hands. I was interested to find that by stroking it in a certain spot under the chin I was able to hypnotise it for long periods. It was not fair to keep this beautiful creature in such a small space, however, and after a decent interval I handed it over to the Tel Aviv Zoo.

Another well-wisher left a flat box containing some forty live quail on our doorstep one day. These I was supposed to slaughter and eat, but instead, I released them and watched them fly happily away.

The canaries presented a greater problem. The wife of one of my own Arab officers sent my wife a beautiful cock canary in a cage. “I send you the bird of peace,” she said in the accompanying letter, “as a token of our gratitude for your miraculous escape.”

From then on the daylight hours were filled to overflowing with his profuse strains of unpremeditated art (though, believe me, it was no lark).

During this time we were frequent guests at the mansion of Mohammed Effendi Abdul Rahim in Jaffa. Mohammed Effendi had made a fortune from oranges and had built himself the most modern house in Palestine—electrically-operated gates and doors, built-in aquaria and fountains, concealed lighting, huge halls panelled in rare woods and floored with expensive marble, and furniture which was the interior decorator’s wildest dream come true.

In a room on the roof of this palace Mohammed Effendi kept his canaries—hundreds of them—and the volume of their song was such that no conversation could be successfully carried on in their vicinity. From the living quarters, however, they were practically inaudible, so that they did not present a problem comparable to that which our one bird created in our small bungalow.

One day Mohammed Effendi's two sons, Ahmed and Akram, called on us, and later must have mentioned to their father that we had a canary. *Ergo*, we liked canaries; but one by itself wasn't much good. The next day two cages arrived, each complete with a mating pair of canaries and its own little nest. From then on we never looked back. Before we knew what had happened eggs had been laid and duly hatched, and we had a dozen canaries.

The din was deafening, and it brought the pair of us nearer to a nervous breakdown than all the concentrated hatred of the Stern Gang. Apart from other factors my long-suffering wife found she had nearly a full-time job sweeping up the sand and birdseed which they scattered indiscriminately over our living-room.

The household of Mohammed Effendi Abdul Rahim was typical of the battles which were being fought between the ideas of the East and the West, between the old and the new, between tradition and progress. Mohammed Effendi was a devout Moslem, and my wife used to visit his wife and daughter in the harim. They rarely left the house, and then only heavily veiled; they were so timid and so unused to company that they could hardly bear to look at, let alone speak to, their visitor. They were quite contented, let it be said, with this state of affairs and had not the slightest wish to lead any other kind of life. Indeed, the thought of venturing into the hostile world outside, even with an escort, filled them with terror.

The boys, on the other hand, were both graduates of the American University of Beirut and spoke perfect English and French in addition to their native Arabic. They loved good music and used to attend all the concerts given by the Palestine Symphony Orchestra in Tel Aviv. They were excellent company and could converse intelligently on any subject. Their father had paid for their education, so he could hardly disapprove too strongly of the tastes they had acquired in the course of it. Except on one point, that is: he would not in any circumstances countenance a marriage for either of his sons to any girl who was not prepared to comply with

the strict Moslem code of female segregation. This meant, of course, that the marriage would have to be arranged by the parents, and that the bride and bridegroom would not meet until the actual marriage ceremony—a state of affairs which was utterly repugnant to the two sons with their Western education. Therefore they remained unmarried all the time I knew them.

One might perhaps have been forgiven for concluding that, after all the assassinations they had committed, those members of the Stern Gang who had been caught would be kept out of mischief indefinitely. Not a bit of it. At the beginning of August, 1942, only three months after our narrow escape, the Stern Gang became the Stern Group once more in official correspondence from Jerusalem, and we in Jaffa were informed that it was proposed to free five men who had been reported from many sources to be key members. This step was to be taken "because it was felt that their release could react considerably on the die-hards of the Group without public security suffering in any way".

Neither Wilkie nor I could work that one out, and in spite of all our protests—very strong protests, too—the five men were duly released. The morale of the police force—or at least those members of it who had seen for themselves the handiwork of the "groupsters"—certainly suffered, and it seemed to us logical to believe that public security suffered likewise.

I never learned whether the "considerable reaction of the die-hards" which had been envisaged turned out to be of the kind which those who overruled our protests had anticipated —Wilkie, for instance, lying dead with six bullet holes in him, his own gun but half drawn from its holster, in the gutter near the Street of Prophets in Jerusalem. (Wilkie was a prophet himself, if ever there was one, but he experienced the difficulty common to most prophets—the problem of getting people to listen to him.)

Or Lord Moyne, for example, shot in the back in Egypt, with the same gun that killed Wilkie; or the dozens of senior officials—cream

of the Palestine Administration—blown to pieces in the King David Hotel: John Farley, Bernard Bourdillon, “Blenks” Blenkinsop, Roderick Musgrave, to name but a few.

Or John Scott, the young Assistant Superintendent of Police shot dead actually within Police Headquarters in Jerusalem, by Stern men dressed in British police uniform.

Or “Con” Conquest or Bob Green, fine, experienced policemen shot dead in Haifa. Or Count Bernadotte, United Nations representative in Palestine, or Captain Roy Farran’s brother, who misguidcdly opened, in the heart of England, an explosive parcel addressed to Roy, and in consequence died in his brother’s stead. And many others, not to mention little matters like the blowing up of Police Headquarters in Jerusalem and Jaffa, the time-bomb in the Colonial Office in London, and the many letter-bombs sent to leading citizens in various parts of England.

But I am anticipating, for most of these events occurred after I had shaken the dust of this Holy Land off my feet for ever.

Before I left Jaffa for good, however, we were able to strike one more blow against Hagana and its constant subornation of military personnel.

At the beginning of August, 1942, L.A.C. Zaks, a locally recruited Jewish member of the Royal Air Force, approached L.A.C. Watts, a driver stationed at an ammunition dump near Ramleh, and asked him to obtain for him ammunition and other warlike stores. He was particularly anxious to acquire a 1,000-lb. aerial bomb and was prepared to pay £1,000 in cash for a truck-load of ammunition. He was also interested in obtaining sub-machine guns and rifles. (This when the Germans were at El Alamein, on the very threshold of Egypt!)

On August 12th Watts was detailed to drive a truck-load of ammunition to an R.A.F. landing field near Gaza, from which light

bombers and fighters made operational sorties over the Western Desert.

Watts contacted Zaks and informed him that he would be prepared to dispose of ten boxes of this ammunition, and Zaks stated that the necessary arrangements would be made.

At the proper time Watts started off on his journey, and before he had gone far he was signalled to stop by a man standing near a stationary car at the side of the road. This man questioned Watts and, satisfied as to his identity, jumped in beside him. The truck drove on, closely followed by the car, which had been waiting on the road for over an hour and which was licensed in the name of the Givat Brenner *kibbutz*, a communal colony just off the Rehovoth-Gaza Road.

About 100 yards before the turning into Givat Brenner Watts was instructed to stop. The private car behind went past the truck and patrolled up and down the road for a considerable distance in order to ensure that there were no police in the vicinity. Three other Jewish scouts were posted at intervals along the road, also looking out for police activity.

These men, and the occupants of the colony car, paid particular attention to a taxi which drew up a few hundred yards ahead of the truck. It was obviously in poor shape mechanically, for the water in the radiator was boiling, and the Arab driver lifted the bonnet to let it cool down before continuing his journey. As they waited the driver and the fellah sitting in front with him ate bread and olives, while the two Moslem women in the back seat, heavily veiled and dressed from head to foot in the traditional black, sat patiently nursing their bundles of clothing and a large water-melon.

The scouts subjected the occupants to a thorough scrutiny, asking the driver and his companion in perfect Arabic their business and their destination. The women they did not speak to, for they had no wish to be accused of interfering with veiled Moslems when

they had important work on hand.

When all were satisfied that the road was clear a signal was given and the truck was directed through some heavy iron gates into an orange grove owned by Givat Brenner colony. The gates were quickly shut and padlocked behind it. As soon as the truck was out of sight of the road the ten boxes of ammunition were taken off and waiting men started to bury them in holes previously dug. Watts was given £10 (a poor return, surely, for the risk he was taking!) and sent on his way; the gates were quickly padlocked behind him once more.

One minute later I drove up to the iron gates with Wilkie and two British Police, closely followed by the Arab taxi which had so interested the look-outs. The Arab in the front seat was a detective, and the two Moslem "women", who had now discarded their black robes and veils, and had pushed aside their bundles, were Sergeants Kenneth Hutchens and "Busty" Woodward, who had handled the case of the Sergeant-major so successfully. There was another British detective in the boot, but he had been so long in his cramped and stifling quarters that he was practically *hors de combat* from heat-stroke by the time we had extricated him.

Fortunately, we had with us, in anticipation of some such emergency, a pair of heavy wire-cutters. We quickly snipped the barbed wire to the side of the gates and ran into the orange grove, where we caught three of the men in the act of burying the ammunition. The two occupants of the car and some of the scouts were also rounded up, making a bag of seven prisoners in all.

I sent a party of police to search the house of one of these prisoners in a nearby colony, but the mukhtar refused to cooperate and rang the alarm bell. The police were attacked by the inhabitants and forced to retire, one British constable having his hand severely bitten in the process.

The search was soon carried out, by a much stronger party,

without further incident; urgent instructions from Jerusalem forbade me to search the houses of any more of the prisoners, in spite of the fact that one of them had a note on him listing 119 rifles and a mass of other military equipment.

The prisoners were put on trial and most of them were duly convicted, though some of the scouts got off because we were not able to prove precisely the part they had played. Zaks was court-martialled and duly convicted.

L.A.C. Watts, who had reported the matter the moment he was approached and had thereafter acted on my instructions, was promoted to corporal and sent home immediately. He did a first-class job and refused a tempting offer of what must have seemed an easy £1,000.

I thoroughly enjoyed pitting my wits against these illegal organisations, which, for their own selfish ends, were prepared to go to any lengths to undermine the war potential of the Allies at a most critical stage in the fighting. In planning these traps it was always necessary to think and be one jump ahead, but this was by no means easy when the other side had the initiative. The waiting period between the planning and the actual show-down was always an absolute nightmare to me. There were so many things which could go wrong; if we did make a slip, or forget to allow for one eventuality, we might lose the very important bait with which the trap was set. I should have had a lot of explaining to do if that had ever happened, but fortunately it never did.

There was, of course, no other way of dealing with these activities, for unless the purchasers were caught in possession we had no evidence on which to take them to court.

The illegal organisations were seizing every opportunity to build up their own arsenals in apparent anticipation of the eventual departure of the British from Palestine.

Even as far back as the spring of 1942 they seem to have been certain that we should withdraw. I knew one missionary, who had witnessed the evacuation of large sections of the community in the Greco-Turkish dispute after the First World War, who in 1942 accepted an invitation to lecture on her experiences to a *soi-disant* cultural organisation in Jerusalem. It was arranged that she should be conveyed by car to the scene of the meeting. To her surprise, she was blindfolded for the journey and never knew where she was taken. Her audience turned out to be a gathering of obviously important people in the Jewish world, who questioned her in detail about the problems involved in mass evacuation of the population. They made no bones about wanting this information in order to know how best to evict the Arab population when the British withdrew. My missionary friend informed them in the strongest possible terms of the wickedness of what they were contemplating, and of the misery that such a step would entail. At this meeting she was shown a map of the future Jewish Empire. It did not include Egypt, but it did include the whole of Palestine, Jordan, Syria, the Lebanon, and—strangely enough —Cyprus. I wonder whether Archbishop Makarios would prefer them to the British!

Chapter 23

WARTIME JOURNEY

Soon after the successful Givat Brenner affair the blow fell. I was sent for by the Inspector-General in the middle of August and informed that it had been decided that I had been working too hard and that for the sake of my health my wife and I were to be sent home on leave by air immediately.

The war was at its height; we had our backs to the wall in the Western Desert, and things had never looked blacker, and we were to pack up and go home to England for an indefinite period, with no indication as to what my future was to be. I argued to the point of insubordination, but the only concession I could obtain was that I would certainly be allowed to return to Palestine when I had had a good rest.

We had two days' notice to catch a 'plane and only had time to pile all our furniture and effects into a spare room in a police station before we were off.

The Lydda District C.I.D. gave us a most wonderful sendoff—a farewell party which will always stand out for us as one of the greatest things in our not uneventful lives. These detectives of all three races were as fine a team as anybody could hope to meet. They worked impossibly long hours and would volunteer for any operation, no matter how great the danger. We had many successes, but they were all without exception the result of team work backed up by a comprehensive system of records and a good intelligence network. Through the whole formation ran a fierce urge to get on with the job, a degree of zeal and application which I have never encountered anywhere else. I was nominally their leader, but when

it came to the point no leading was necessary. My tour in Jaffa was in many ways the peak of my career, but because of the nature of the tasks which were our lot the fruits of success were more often than not unpleasant to the taste.

It was with real regret, therefore, that we said goodbye to our comrades and set out on our journey home for an unwanted and unnecessary leave.

Because the Mediterranean was closed to us we had to make something of a detour, and in the end it took us a month to get home.

Our first stop was Cairo, where life seemed to be going on much as usual in spite of the proximity of the enemy.

In Alexandria the many Italian women were getting their hair permed and buying new dresses in preparation for the victory celebrations, for the Afrika Korps was only sixty miles away, and El Duce himself had arrived in North Africa complete Avith white charger on which to lead the triumphal entry into the city.

In the British Embassy secret documents were being burned. In the desert, however, an unknown general, selected personally by Churchill for the task, was taking over command of the Eighth Army.

Monty, whom I had last seen looking with an unenthusiastic eye at the contents of Abu Dorrah's armoury at Silet-elHartiyeh, was calmly making his plans to out-fox Rommel.

The night life of the Metropolis seemed as gay as ever, with plenty of British and Allied troops of all ranks relaxing for a spell after the sandstorms, the fleas and the flies of the front line.

Prices were high, but food was plentiful and of a quality in marked contrast to anything we had been able to obtain in Palestine.

In the Moslem world Ramadhan, the month of fasting, was well on its way; each night the cafes and restaurants were full of the effendiyat playing tric-trac and dominoes while they filled themselves to repletion in preparation for the fast which would start with the morrow's dawn and go on all day. To the devout Moslem it is a serious sin even to swallow one's spittle between dawn and dusk during Ramadhan; the sight and sound of promiscuous expectoration left us in no doubt as to the wealth of piety with which we were surrounded.

After a couple of days of sightseeing, during which we consumed quantities of ices and rich pastries at Groppi's, we set off for Wadi Haifa and Khartoum, our next night stop. We were now in a Junkers 52, of all things, a German plane apparently made of corrugated iron, with an engine on each wing and one in the middle, on which the Belgian pilot sat.

That night in the Grand Hotel in Khartoum my wife optimistically put her white shoes outside our bedroom door on the first floor for cleaning. As we were due to leave at 4.30 a.m., I told her she was wasting her time and did not, therefore, follow her example with my own shoes.

The night was unbearably hot, and at 3 a.m., unable to sleep, I pushed aside my mosquito net and sat on the edge of my bed to sip iced water from the flask on the bedside table. My back was to the door and I was facing the large open window giving on to the outside balcony which ran the length of the hotel. As I lifted the glass to my lips I saw, through the mesh of my wife's mosquito net, a dark figure suddenly materialise in the open window, silhouetted against the bright moonlight beyond. There was a pause, and then I saw a leg come up over the window-sill and into the room; I put the glass down on the table. I started to rise, with the intention of investigating, but unfortunately the bed creaked. The figure paused, half in and half out of the room, and turned his head towards me. I got up and ran towards him. He threw something at me, hitting me

in the chest, saying in a loud voice, *"A vous"* and, quick as a flash, he was gone. I got to the window and jumped out, but the gallery was already empty and my quarry had vanished.

I went back into the room. There on the floor, where they had bounced off my chest, lay my wife's shoes.

The next day we were off to Juba and Malakal in the southern Sudan. At Malakal we came down with a bump and burst the tyre on our tail wheel. We waited patiently in the heat for an hour while the R.A.F. personnel stationed there repaired the damage for us. Working on the landing strip were gangs of incredibly tall Negroes —of an average height of 6 feet 6 inches, it seemed to me—who were wearing nothing but strings of beads, and these were round their necks.

On to Stanleyville in the Belgian Congo, where we had to wait a week for a B.O.A.C. Empire flying-boat to take us on to West Africa. And a fascinating week it was, for this was our first insight into African colonisation. We were most impressed by the obvious contentment and happiness of the Africans, particularly the women in their brightly coloured body and head-cloths. There is nothing democratic about the Belgian Congo; it is an autocracy pure and simple, but a benevolent autocracy which seemed to work perfectly. We were taken to see the quarters provided for the Government employees, and I have yet to see better African housing.

We visited the elephant school, and watched the huge, intractable, African elephants being tamed and trained and set to work, a feat not attempted in any British colony.

The Congo at Stanleyville, 1,000 miles from the mouth of this vast river, is almost half a mile wide. Above the town the river narrows as it drops through a ravine to create the Stanley Rapids. I shot these rapids in a war canoe, manned by sixty paddlers, and as we rushed headlong between jagged rocks, carried onwards and downwards on the foaming torrents at fantastic speed, I thought my

last hour had come.

My wife firmly declined to accompany me on this trip, and thereby avoided a soaking, but for me it was a most thrilling experience.

After dark the light of the fireflies on the grass and in the trees was almost strong enough to read by, and the night air was heavy with the scent of frangipani, hibiscus and bougainvillaea.

But it was not a healthy place to live in; so great was the humidity, in fact, that one was never really dry, and shoes placed on the concrete floor of the bedroom at night had a white fungus growth under them by the next morning.

Eventually we took off once more, through French Equatorial Africa to Lagos in Nigeria, where Bob Jarrett was waiting to meet us. Here we had a bad setback, for Claire, the flying boat ahead of us, had taken off in good order and had never been heard of since. In consequence, a ban was placed on all women passengers in B.O.A.C. planes to Lisbon, and we were told that we could either go back whence we came or wait for months in the hope of getting a boat home. After an interchange of cables between the Nigerian and the Palestine Governments, we were finally booked on a Pan-American Boeing Clipper due to arrive shortly in Liberia from Brazil.

In order to catch this plane we were bundled off quickly in a U.S.A.F. plane to Accra, capital of the Gold Coast, and deposited in an establishment, run by a Greek and his African wife, which glorified in the name of “Sea View Hotel”. Our room had three main items of furniture—two single beds and a full-sized bath all in a row. The bath looked fine, until one discovered that there was no plumbing attached to it and therefore no means either of putting water into it or taking it out, except with the aid of buckets or jugs. The nearest we got to a sea view were the lines of large fish, split open and drying in the hot sun in the African courtyard below our

window. If we couldn't see the sea, we could at least smell its harvest.

We were pleased—at first—to find that our hotel was also the only public cinema in the town; the first night we thoroughly enjoyed Freddie Bartholomew in *Lord Jeff* and a Passing Parade documentary about an old woman who cured the squire's heart disease by dosing him with copious draughts of digitalis, which she distilled from the common foxglove.

We were not so enthusiastic about the programme after we had seen it six nights running; the trouble was that the screen was in the corner of the courtyard right outside the slatted half-door of our bedroom on the first floor. We could not sit in our bedroom and read because the light shone on to the screen and ruined the picture. A further complication was that the "Gents" used by the patrons of the cinema and the bar was just behind the screen. The customers—mostly Americans with a collection of very expressive oaths at their command— had to go backwards and forwards past our room every time, and few of them did so without going to the trouble of standing on tiptoe to look over the top of the Wild West saloon type door into our room.

We passed our time as best we might during the day, exploring the markets and the shopping centres and pestering the airline people for news of our plane. One thing which struck us most forcibly was the marked contrast between the happy, laughing people of the Congo and their brothers in Accra, who seemed sullen and ill-tempered by comparison.

Just as we were resigning ourselves to a second week of the little old foxglove woman we were told that our Clipper was due to arrive at Fisherman's Lake in Liberia the next day. We packed quickly and, leaving Accra with no regrets, found ourselves once more on a U.S.A.F. troop-carrying plane.

We arrived at Fisherman's Lake to find it an American Army

camp, pure and simple. They had not had any women there before, and had no facilities for them, but we managed.

The next morning we watched the huge flying-boat come in from Brazil, and by midday we were off, heading for Bolama in Portuguese Guinea. This proved to be a depressing, dilapidated little town which appeared to have seen better days. Everything was in decay, and one felt that its importance had waned with the passing of the slave trade.

The next morning we were on our way again, flying nonstop to Lisbon, a city which prospered tremendously because of the war. There was no shortage of anything in Lisbon, luxury or necessity. One could even buy unlimited quantities of English pound notes for 8s. 6d. in local currency, though, of course, it was an offence to take them into England.

We stayed in a hotel which was full of Nazis, many of them on the staff of the German Embassy. It seemed strange indeed to stand beside them in the lift and see them “Heil Hitlering” each other.

Then, after four days in Lisbon, we flew on to Filton in a D.C.3, operated by K.L.M.

In the K.L.M. plane immediately behind us travelled Leslie Howard. It was his last journey.

Chapter 24

UNEASY INTERLUDE

I was given no indication before my departure from Palestine as to the proposed length of my involuntary leave, but I did not expect to spend more than a couple of months in England at the most.

In the event it was precisely nine months before we got away again, and nearly twelve months that we were absent from Palestine altogether. And whoever decided that a holiday of any duration, let alone such a long one, in England in wartime was a good idea, was a poor psychologist indeed.

After about a fortnight I was haunting the Colonial Office once more, trying to put in motion the machinery necessary to get me back to the job again.

Some of this time I spent interviewing at the Crown Agents for the Colonies prospective candidates for the Palestine Police, and when doing so I often smiled inwardly to think that only twelve years earlier I had been turned down flatly when I myself had been the applicant. Because of this, I made a point of giving each one a sympathetic hearing, trying always to assess the fundamental qualities which lay behind the facade of shyness or aggressiveness.

Eventually, after much arguing and pestering, we sailed on a troopship for Durban, a journey which lasted almost six weeks and, because of U-boats, took us nearly over to America before we finally turned south. There were a number of alarms and excursions, but, although our escorting destroyers put down patterns of depth-charges more than once, we saw no sign of enemy action. Off Freetown, an area notorious for its torpedoings, our engines broke

down and we were left wallowing by ourselves for a long morning while the rest of the convoy steamed on without us. The flying-boat which came out and circled round us did a little to relieve our anxieties, but we were all thankful when we got going once more.

Arrived in Jerusalem, we were duly installed in accommodation previously arranged for us in the German Hospice. This was a hostel run by Catholic nuns, all of whom were German; strange as it may seem, the wants of many fairly senior Army, Air Force and Government officers were ministered to by them throughout the war.

We were allocated a large bed-sitting-room on the first floor, which we were able to furnish with some of our own equipment from Sarona.

The food, which was served to us with much ceremony by the worthy nuns, left, alas, much to be desired. A solitary sardine on a small piece of toasted black bread was a special breakfast treat, while for lunch and dinner the sole "vegetables" almost invariably consisted of thick slabs of cold beetroot served without vinegar or seasoning of any kind and a sort of thick porridge made, I think, of whole boiled barley.

There was good food to be had, of course, in places like the King David Hotel, and twice we were Mr. Spinney's guests to an excellent meal there; as a general rule, however, that was not for the likes of us, and was far beyond our pocket, anyway.

About once a month the Sisters lashed out and treated us to a "chocolate cream" as a sweet; in fact, it consisted of a thin chocolate blancmange (to use the contradiction in terms which is now generally accepted as part of our language) with a splash of tinned evaporated milk to provide the cream element to the dish. On one of these gala occasions my wife was eating her chocolate cream (which I must confess held no particular appeal for me) when I noticed that she was chewing something. I had not started

my own portion, so I thought there must be some new constituent in the usually pappy mess. “What have you found to chew? Is there something different this time ?” Her jaws stopped chewing while her tongue explored the reason for their apparently subconscious activity. I saw her expression change and her eyes go glassy. Quickly she put the spoon to her lips and deposited into it the skeleton of a large cockroach. The legs and antennae were missing and, as I explained to my wife in an attempt to console her, she had obviously already had all the nourishment out of it.

We shared a table in the dining-room with Joy and Bernard Bourdillon. Bernard, whose father was previously Governor of Nigeria, was an administrative officer in the Secretariat—a lanky, thin streak of a man with a ready wit and a keen sense of the ridiculous which did more perhaps than anything else to keep me sane during the time we were together.

Joy was one of those women with a cool, clear voice; she was charming and delightful in every way, but, unfortunately for her, every time she made a comment about the food it seemed to be overheard by Sister Leoba, the large nun who waited at our table.

When Joy’s laugh rang through the dining-room—as it often did, for we were a cheerful party—it brought forth frowns of disapprobation from some of the more elderly residents of the Hospice, whose own sense of humour had long since withered and died.

We were both very sorry indeed when the Bourdillons found a small house in Jerusalem and decided to set up in a home of their own, for we had become very fond of them and of their little daughter, Sally. We were, in a way, envious of them, though, as it transpired, we had no cause to be. When the King David Hotel was blown up by Jews a short time later poor Bernard was one of the many fatal casualties among the senior Government officials who had their offices there.

Chapter 25

FAREWELL TO PALESTINE

I was now a Deputy Superintendent, and my job in Jerusalem was that of officer in charge of the Criminal Records Office: this included responsibility for the Fingerprint Bureau, the Forensic Science Laboratory, the Narcotics Bureau and the Headquarters Flying Squad. Most of these sections functioned automatically and needed little or no supervision from me.

Several mornings each week, however, I found myself watching the screening of films in one or other of the local cinemas, for I was also the police representative on the Censorship Board. I was paid a fee of 10s. for each film screened, but it seemed to me that I might have been more fruitfully engaged elsewhere.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of my job during this period was the Narcotics Bureau, and here I was fortunate to be able to get Alec Shand transferred from the Jaffa C.I.D. to run it. With him came a young Arab detective whom we had captured in Jaffa when he was the personal secretary to an important gang leader. We had subsequently won this boy over to our side, and I had employed him in Jaffa, first as a telephone operator and later as a detective, a job at which he excelled.

When he came to Jerusalem he was training to be a police radio operator, so that he was a valuable and versatile man to have around. Alec Shand and he appointed themselves my principal bodyguards in Jerusalem, a task they performed with marked success.

With these two I was able to devise and operate—for the last

time—a variation of the “policeman in the boot” trick.

There was, throughout the war, a constant trafficking in hashish and opium from Syria and the Lebanon through Palestine to Egypt, and undoubtedly military transport was used in this connection on many occasions, with or without the connivance of the drivers.

We received information regarding one Army driver, stationed near Acre, who was known to have agreed to convey a consignment of hashish on his next journey to Gaza.

This driver made these trips fairly frequently, collecting stores from various camps and depots for delivery in the south.

We arranged with the military authorities that he should be detailed to collect some crates from a certain depot, making sure that he had adequate notice to allow him to make the necessary arrangements with the smugglers.

Among the goods he collected on the appointed day was a large packing case, one side of which could be opened from within.

In this case we had installed Alec Shand, the Arab detectivecum-radio operator, and a small self-contained radio transmitter; in due course they were loaded on to the back of the covered Army truck. While the vehicle was in motion they were able to open their door a little and even to stretch their legs now and again, but when the truck was stationary they had to remain in absolute silence.

We had no idea where the drugs were to be collected or delivered, so that it was not possible to make definite plans of any kind, let alone to set a foolproof trap.

The driver set off at the scheduled time and soon stopped for a few moments to pick up an Arab waiting at the side of the road. Then they turned into a village track and a consignment of hashish worth about £5,000 was put on board.

Some hours later the truck came to a halt on a little-used track near Gaza where the smugglers were waiting. As they finished unloading their cargo they found themselves looking down the barrels of the revolvers held by Alec Shand and his companion. When they had been searched for arms and handcuffed together a signal giving a map reference was sent out on the portable transmitter, and the two Flying Squad trucks standing by in Gaza came quickly to the scene. The smugglers and their filthy merchandise were in the bag.

I find it difficult, as I record this story in the quiet peace of a Cotswold village, to re-create adequately in mere words the courage of these two men who, without hesitation, hid in a wooden box with one gun and a handful of cartridges each and allowed themselves to be driven off in a hostile country without any indication as to their eventual destination, prepared to tackle an unknown number of desperate criminals. If they had been discovered or if the radio had been broken during the course of the bumpy journey they would almost certainly have been overwhelmed and killed and their bodies disposed of.

Perhaps the most interesting and significant aspect of the whole case was the fact that, Arab and Englishman, they were prepared to trust each other with their lives, confident that that trust would never be betrayed.

I wish I could place on record the name of our Arab comrade, but he is still alive, somewhere in the Middle East, and I would not willingly jeopardise his safety further. If he ever reads this story, as I hope he may one day, I should like him to know that I salute him and honour him for his gallantry and devotion to duty.

One of the jobs which came my way during this period was to dispose of all the prohibited drugs which had been seized in Palestine during the previous two years or so. For this purpose we used the Jerusalem municipal incinerators (a tiny island in a veritable ocean of odiferous garbage), and some idea of the extent

of the traffic can be gained from the fact that the value of the drugs we destroyed was well over half a million pounds, and that it took us two whole days to do it.

Many and varied were the methods used to get the drugs undetected into Egypt, but perhaps one of the most ingenious was that reported by the Narcotics Bureau in Cairo of a herd of camels each of which had had tins of drugs inserted under the skin of the stomach, the wound being stitched up and allowed to heal before the journey was made. On arrival at the other end the unfortunate beasts were slaughtered to recover the goods.

Another method which intrigued me was that in which the drugs were sealed in small torpedo-shaped canisters which the camel was forced to swallow. In the normal course of nature, the canister would be passed, by which time (in theory, anyway) the herd would be over the border into Egypt. This idea seemed to me somewhat risky, for if the camel, through some miscalculation on the part of the driver, decided to have a motion just as he was passing through the Customs, both the camel and the cameleer would in all probability drop (if I may be permitted a colloquialism) a clanger.

Meanwhile, the political situation got steadily worse. The Government in general and the police in particular appeared to have lost what little initiative they might previously have held.

Jewish gang activity became more daring and more frequent, and at the beginning of February, 1944, a clever plot to kill the High Commissioner himself when going to attend the service at St. George's Cathedral was only averted by sheer chance.

Entry to the Anglican Cathedral in Jerusalem is by way of a large stone archway on St. George's Road. On the night of February 3rd a Christian Arab driving past in his taxi saw two men on a ladder doing something to the archway leading to the Cathedral. He stopped his taxi and walked back to see what was going on. One of

the men drew a gun and ordered him to clear off. He did. He went straight to the nearest Police Station and reported what he had seen, offering to go with the police to identify the men, whom he recognised as Jews.

When the police party got to the Cathedral the men had disappeared, though the ladder was found lying beside the wall. The Arab drove the police round the area in his taxi, and soon came upon two Jews whom he identified as those he had seen with the ladder.

As the police approached them the men drew guns and opened fire, killing the taxi-driver. They then made good their escape.

Examination of the arch disclosed that a large stone near the centre had been loosened; the mortar between other stones on one side of the arch had been removed, electric bell-wire had been inserted, and the channel had then been re-cemented, leaving no trace of the buried wire. Without doubt an explosive charge was to have been hidden in the top of the arch and connected by the buried wire to a battery and switch, so that when His Excellency and his party were passing through the charge would have been detonated—from a safe distance, of course—bringing the whole archway down on top of them. It seemed to me to be a poor way to show their gratitude for the reprieve of their mate, Becker. But then, if Becker had not been reprieved, in all probability this attempt would never have been made.

After I had left Palestine the Government did actually execute one Jew, Dov Gruner, who had been wounded and captured when he was taking part in a mass attack by Hagana on a police station at Petakh Tiqvah, just north of Tel Aviv. By way of retaliation, two British Army Sergeants were promptly hanged in Hadera.

I took part in one major operation during my short stay in Jerusalem, though I had no part in its planning.

This was a raid by a large combined force of police and military on the Jewish colony of Ramat Hakhovesh, which was known to be the training ground for the Hagana shock troops.

The military were used to form two cordons round the village, while the function of the police was to do the actual searching for firearms and other prohibited articles.

As the colony was in the Tulkarm area, the police side of the operation was under the command of the Superintendent of the Nablus District.

I travelled up to Nablus from Jerusalem the day before, had a couple of hours' sleep there, and then left with the rest of the party soon after midnight.

My personal escort on this occasion was a young constable of the Flying Squad, who, while not as experienced as the three Alecs, nevertheless took his duties and responsibilities very seriously.

In Jerusalem he used to carry a Schmeiser sub-machine gun —a beautiful weapon issued to Nazi paratroopers—which had a tremendous rate of fire. We had both tried it on the range on many occasions and had found it virtually impossible to fire less than three rounds with one pressure of the trigger.

As this weapon would be an encumbrance rather than an asset for the job ahead of us, I told my escort to leave it in the Nablus armoury, and that we would collect it on the way back.

We reached Ramat Hakhovesh and moved in at the appointed time. My particular job, after all the colonists had been rounded up and put under guard, was to supervise the actual searchparties.

The rounding up was far more difficult than anything I had previously experienced on an operation of this kind. The villagers offered the strongest possible resistance to our efforts; they first assembled in a crowd, with a line of pregnant women in front,

while the men lobbed rocks at us over their heads. When we got in among them the women clawed at us, tearing our clothes, biting and scratching and resisting every attempt to get them to the assembly point. Boiling water—and other less pleasant liquids—were thrown on us from the windows of houses, and every possible obstruction was offered to prevent us doing the job we had been sent to do.

Eventually we got them nearly all behind barbed-wire compounds which had been erected for the purpose by the military and were then able to start our search. We soon found the tents in which the men under training had been accommodated and we found thousands of empty rifle cartridge cases, but all the firearms had been very cleverly hidden.

We went over all the surrounding area thoroughly, combing every bit of ground for soft or disturbed soil under which the firearms might be buried, but without success. Finally, we reached the communal dining-hall, a large building with extensive kitchens and several ante-rooms, and started to make a thorough examination of the walls, floors and ceilings.

When it was seen that we were searching the dining-hall, many of the colonists in the compound rushed the guards at the gate and came storming over at us. They got in through the kitchen and they bombarded us with everything they could lay their hands on—saucepans, baking-tins, dishes, cups, plates, billets of wood and even bits of the stove itself; in fact, they threw at us literally everything but the kitchen sink, and the only reason they did not throw that, too, was the plumbing to which it was attached.

The noise was indescribable, and the scene must have looked rather like a Charlie Chaplin slapstick comedy in Cinerama— except that it was no joke to be clonked on the head with a frying-pan, nor to feel a flying saucer come in to land on one's ear.

There was no doubt that we were on the right track and, while

some of the party did their best to cope with the angry inhabitants, the rest of us tried to locate the hidden armoury. Before we could do so, however, orders were given for us to withdraw, and we went away empty-handed.

It was after 8 p.m. by the time we got back to Nablus and were ready to move off to Jerusalem and home. I don't suppose there was one of us who had not sustained a number of cuts and bruises and, for my part, my shins in particular were black and blue, with a number of minor abrasions thrown in. We had been on the go without a break since midnight, so we were all just about all in. It had been quite a day.

But the day was not yet over for me, unfortunately.

I was driving my own car; sitting beside me was an Army Captain and in the back seat was my escort, with the Schmciscr sub-machine gun across his knees.

We set out on the winding forty-mile journey to Jerusalem, down through Wadi Haramiyeh, the Valley of Thieves, in which Paddy Dowling had been killed five years before.

When we had gone a few miles I took my cigarettes out of my pocket, lit one myself and handed the packet to the Captain beside me and the constable sitting in the middle of the seat behind. As I put my left hand up to remove the cigarette from my mouth the constable struck a match to light his own and, as he did so, I saw in the rear mirror both his hands cupped round the flame and silhouetted by it. At that precise moment, when both his hands, as I saw with my own eyes, were up at his face, the gun lying across his knees fired. And it did what I had never been able to do myself—it fired one round only. The bullet went through my left shoulder, through the palm of my left hand, smashing the knuckle of my ring finger, and then out into the night, leaving a neat round hole in the windscreen to mark its passing.

Fortunately, I was able to pull up without going over the precipice on the right of the road.

It appeared that when my young constable had left the gun in the Nablus armoury it had been uncocked—as he always carried it—and with the magazine removed. The gun was something of a novelty and doubtless the man in charge of the armoury had examined it and had left it cocked.

When we went to collect it the lad, tired out and sore as he was, had replaced the magazine, but had not checked the cocking handle. There was no other safety device on it: when the cocking handle was forward the gun was safe; when the handle was back and a magazine in position the gun would fire at a touch of the finger.

How it fired by itself on this occasion, and fired one shot only, we never discovered.

My constable should, of course, have checked the cocking handle as a matter of routine before replacing the magazine, but after all we had been through that day it was an omission which anybody might have made.

The whole thing was most unfortunate for both of us, but I am glad to be able to say, on looking back, that neither at the time of the incident nor on any subsequent occasion did I say one word to reproach him for what had happened.

Indeed, I went to considerable lengths—greater lengths, perhaps, than were wise—to save him from any censure or disciplinary action, and I never regretted having done so, though I thereby brought down considerable adverse criticism on my own head.

He was so shocked by what had happened that at the time I was afraid he might do something desperate.

One bright spot for us during this period was that my wife had,

on the recommendation of Mrs. Bernard Shaw, wife of the Judge who was years later shot and wounded by terrorists in Cyprus, been offered a post as educational adviser with the British Council—a post she was well qualified to hold. It entailed visiting all the non-Government schools in the area to see how best they could be helped with grants of books, equipment and—sometimes—money. This she thoroughly enjoyed, but she was appalled at the archaic methods and textbooks in use in most of the schools.

We both had a high regard for the British Council and its work, and had done everything in our power to support it, both in Tel Aviv and Jaffa, during our previous tour. We had an equally high regard for the intellectual ability and academic stature of the people who ran it, though we were forced to admit that their business and administrative methods did not always attain the same high standard. Indeed, in some ways their approach was rather unworldly, but in a community in which business came before all eke this shortcoming—if such it could be called—was, to say the least, refreshing.

One incident which has never ceased to intrigue me started when I received an urgent call for help from the wife of a senior member of the British Council in Palestine, who said she was in dire trouble in the Vienna Cafe in Zion Square, the hub of the cafe life of Jerusalem. I went hurriedly to the scene and found the lady beset by a flurry of gesticulating waiters, of whom one seemed particularly irate. I pushed my way into the middle of the group to see what it was all about. It transpired that the good lady had gone into the cafe to have her elevenses, for which she had ordered a milk with coffee. The waiter, she claimed, had brought her instead a coffee with milk (there was some subtle difference in the proportion of milk to coffee and a corresponding variation in price), but had charged her for the drink she had ordered. An argument had ensued in which tempers became heated. Eventually, because the waiter, she said, was rude to her, the lady hit him smartly on the nose with a shoe-tree.

The evidence in the case—namely, the glass of milky coffee — had already been consumed, so there was no point of obtaining the services of an expert to pronounce judgment on the proportion of milk to coffee and the correct description of the beverage; I poured oil on the troubled waters, got the lady to apologise to the ruffled waiter, satisfied myself by a tweak that the injured organ was not broken, and paid the bill.

The lady was profuse in her gratitude for my unspectacular assistance, and so was her husband when I saw him later. The question I was dying to ask, but never liked to, was: Why the shoe-tree? What on earth could she be doing with a single shoe-tree in her hand in the most fashionable cafe in Jerusalem just at the moment when she had to have an argument with a waiter?

I must admit, however, that, if she did have to give somebody a sharp lesson, she chose a very suitable weapon. It was one of the springy, whangy type.

* * *

The worsening security position and the gradual realisation that I was not likely to be given another post in Palestine in which I could, as in the past, get to grips with the situation, had a most depressing effect on me. As a policeman, I doubtless took an over-simplified view of matters. To me a thing (in theory, anyway) was either right or wrong, legal or illegal; if it was illegal, my job was to do all in my power to bring to justice the person responsible for it: it was equally my job to see that a man should be able to do without hindrance that which he was legally entitled to do.

But there was another factor in the situation—a sinister element which could allow the guilty to go free and unpunished, and which might well hamper and beset the innocent. It was known as “political expediency”. It lost us Palestine, it lost us the friendship and respect of the Arab world, and it brought us nothing in return.

If we had concerned ourselves more with right and wrong and less with political expediency from the time of the Balfour Declaration onward things might now be very different in the Middle East. There would not, for instance, be half a million Palestine Arab refugees squatting homeless and unwanted in the Jordan Valley, and Glubb Pasha would still be commanding the Arab Legion. (It is surely a remarkable tribute to his personality and ability that he was able to remain for so long keeping a restraining hand on the politics of that unhappy and troubled area.)

One of our major faults, as I see it, is that our diplomacy has not kept pace with the times. We still try to run our Foreign Service—and Colonial Service—on lines which did very well in the days of Queen Victoria and the hansom cab, but which are now completely *demode* and unrealistic. Some of our senior officials abroad should learn that a year's hard work can be more than offset by a moment's condescension, and that the day of the *pukka sahib* is past. The man who is always conscious of his own importance ("After all, I am Her Majesty's representative in this area, you know!") should have his passport withdrawn and be kept at home permanently.

With a growing sense of frustration, I stayed on in Jerusalem for seven months, while my friends and comrades were killed one by one by terrorist organisations which seemed to be virtually immune from punishment. By this time Alec Shand and I were both suffering from chronic nervous indigestion and were consuming vast quantities of stomach powder together. Wilkie was a frequent visitor at the Hospice, but it wasn't really to see me that he came. He used to try and get my wife by herself and say to her, "For God's sake, get him out of here before it's too late. He can't stay here. They're bound to get him if he does. You must get him away!"

Eventually, convinced at last that my usefulness in Palestine was past, I allowed myself to be persuaded by his counsel, and I asked for a transfer to another colony.

In March, 1944, we left Palestine for the last time, travelling to

Egypt by car over the Sinai Desert and thence by boat to England and—I hoped—fresh fields to explore.

When we said goodbye to the faithful Wilkie we arranged to meet in London at some future date, but he was murdered before he could keep the appointment.

PART TWO

LAND OF THE HUMMING BIRD

Chapter 26

PORT OF SPAIN

Trinidad! I rolled the name round my tongue, savouring the taste of it, as I studied the letter from the Colonial Office.

After many months of futility and frustration in wartime London, where everybody but myself seemed to have an important job to do, this long-awaited letter offering me an appointment as a Superintendent in the Trinidad and Tobago Police (one must never forget Tobago) came as a breath of fresh air amid the fog and murk of the Metropolis.

Trinidad! The word conjured up in my imagination visions of pirates sailing the Spanish Main, of deeds of gallantry and cruelty, of lush vegetation and the clear blue waters of the Caribbean, of plantations and stately plantation houses, of crinolined ladies and dusky, liveried slaves. I realised then, of course, that my knowledge of the area was not exactly up-todate, but although I set out to read every available book on the subject my mental pictures still proved to be very far removed from the real thing.

After keeping me hanging about for nearly nine months, the Colonial Office was now determined that I should take up my new post without delay. This meant that I had to fly out, with the promise that my wife should follow by boat with our goods and chattels as soon as possible.

At the beginning of January, 1945, therefore, with the snow thick on the ground, I left from Poole Harbour in an Empire flying boat for Lisbon and the Gambia. There I transferred to a Boeing Clipper and took off in the evening to fly the South Atlantic. Dawn

found us, after an uneventful night's sleep in comfortable beds, circling the mouth of the Amazon waiting for sufficient light to permit us to come down on the waters of that mighty river, opposite the town of Belem. Here, in an atmosphere which, in spite of the early hour, was bothdamp and hot, we had an indifferent breakfast before starting the last lap of the journey.

That afternoon we came down at Cocorite Bay in Trinidad—a bay which, apart from the presence of our gigantic flying boat, the waiting launches and the ramshackle jetty, might have been just as Christopher Columbus saw it. As we taxied into our moorings alongside the wooden jetty the sun clouded over without warning, and we were confined for ten minutes in the unbearably humid atmosphere of the cabin of the aircraft by a rainstorm of a density beyond anything I had imagined possible. I had seen, in the course of my wanderings, many so-called tropical rainstorms, but never anything to compare with this. The heavens simply opened, letting through a vast quantity of water so concentrated that it was impossible to see more than a yard or two through it.

As suddenly as it had started so it stopped, just as though some supernatural hand had opened and shut a celestial faucet. Immediately the surrounding vegetation and land started to steam, adding to the general discomfort of the passengers, to whom the transportation, in two days, from thick snow to humid heat was more than trying. And as the rain stopped, the heavy pelicans, which had perched on the nearby rocks during the storm, lumbered lazily into the air to continue their diving with thump and splash into the muddy bay in pursuit of fish.

Muddy ? I had expected pellucid blue waters, but these were, in fact, brown and opaque. As I later learned, this was the western side of the island, which, with the east coast of Venezuela, forms the Gulf of Paria; the muddiness of the whole gulf is due to the fact that the silt-laden Orinoco River empties into it on the South American side.

As I stepped on to the landing stage I looked expectantly around for the police officer charged with meeting the new Superintendent and steering him through the landing formalities. Not a sign of anybody, so I dealt with the Customs myself and then found that the Immigration Officer was, in fact, a constable of the Trinidad and Tobago Police. I told him who I was, but he had had no prior warning of my coming. He had no instructions for me, so I telephoned the Commissioner of Police, who was, to say the least, surprised to learn of my arrival; he had been asked some time previously whether he was willing to accept me and had said he would, but he had had no notification from the Colonial Office that I had been appointed, and he certainly had not expected me to arrive out of the blue like this, without any warning.

Nevertheless, he sent a car out at once to collect me and, within the hour, I was installed in the Officers' Mess at Police Headquarters in Port of Spain.

Notification of the time of my arrival came from the Colonial Office two days later.

The building which housed the Officers' Mess was constructed of massive slabs of a granite-like stone, all of which I later learned had been shipped out from England in the last century as ballast in the old sailing ships. The jalousied archways of the cool and lofty ante-room gave on to a neat little garden in which I saw my first humming-bird, hovering like a large moth, its long tongue delicately gathering the nectar from a peach covered hibiscus blossom. I watched it, fascinated, as it darted from bloom to bloom, trying in vain to distinguish the tiny, fast-beating wings which enabled it apparently to defy the laws of gravity.

I was, I discovered, the only resident officer in the mess; that evening I sat down at the end of a dining table capable of seating at least thirty people to a solitary dinner of excellently cooked leg of lamb, complete with all the trimmings. This was followed by a salad of passion fruit, pawpaw and banana, topped with fresh cream. The

meal was served by two well-trained, soft-footed Negroes in suits of snow-white drill.

This, I thought, is the life for me, and I wondered why other officers, particularly the single ones, did not take advantage of the amenities available and live in the mess. (I was to learn the answer to this a week later, when the day of reckoning came and I found that I had to pay for the whole leg of lamb, though I had eaten but one portion, not to mention the full salary of the cook, who had been employed at short notice specially to cater for my needs, and whom I had never seen.)

During the course of my first evening on the island several of the officers dropped in to the mess for a sundowner and to read the periodicals in the ante-room or play a game of snooker. One of them—a white Trinidadian—gave me a cordial invitation to attend the races on the Savannah the following afternoon, the last day of the Christmas Meeting. He told me that all senior police officers had a standing invitation to make use of the Stewards' Box and, seeing a chance to learn something of the social and sporting life of the country, I accepted with alacrity.

I retired to bed that night well pleased with what I had seen of my new surroundings, feeling that I could be very happy there when I had settled in.

I was awakened betimes the next morning by a loudspeaker of the Rediffusion Service playing with enthusiasm and some justification "Oh, what a beautiful morning!" As I lay listening to it, sipping the cup of tea brought to me by one of the servants of the previous night, I became aware of a somewhat monotonous conversation taking place in French just outside my window. I got up and went to look out at the small lawn which lay between me and the main road and saw there a number of fairly large birds with black-and-white markings, busy pecking for insects amid the grass and flowers. They paused to give me a quick glance and then resumed their foraging, interspersing it with the same question

asked of each other time and again in a raucous voice—*"Qu'est-ce-qu'il dit? Qu'est-ce-qu'il dit?"* They neither waited for, nor appeared to expect, an answer, which was perhaps just as well.

Robert, the Negro steward, appeared with some shaving water, and I enquired what time breakfast would be served. “Breakfas’ twelve o'clock, sah!” he said. I had a healthy appetite and was already feeling distinctly peckish. I told him that I could not wait that long, and he patiently explained to me that tea—which consisted of bacon and eggs—would be ready in twenty minutes, reiterating that breakfast would be served at noon. Lunch, it seemed, did not exist as a meal in the West Indian diet sheet.

After a desultory morning spent at Police Headquarters (the day was a public holiday, and the administrative offices were not open), I was duly collected by my brother Superintendent and whisked off to the race meeting.

The Savannah—a vast, flat, open park in the middle of Port of Spain—is, to the visitor, the most attractive physical feature of the city. Three miles in circumference, it contains not only the big racecourse with its permanent grandstands, paddocks and stables, but also countless cricket pitches on which myriads of males in all age groups from six to sixty play innumerable games of cricket at every conceivable opportunity—and there is still plenty of room for association football of a very high standard to be played.

Netball is another very popular sport, particularly among the young men; not as players, of course—that is left to the girls—but as spectators. They seem to get a tremendous kick out of the antics of the performers, knowing them all by name and indulging in a lusty form of barracking which would cover English exponents of the game with such acute embarrassment as to cause them to dissolve into tears and make it impossible to continue. The Trinidadian girls took it all in good part, however, and even appeared to welcome these attentions; when it came to repartee, indeed, they could hold their own with the best of their fans and,

when words failed, clinch the argument with a provocative waggle of the buttocks. But all this I observed later.

As we approached the Savannah this warm January afternoon I noted with interest the many cars of every size and vintage, all heading in the same direction. We joined in a long traffic queue and made slow progress to the rear of the grandstand, where there was a special park reserved for police cars. We threaded our way through the gay throng, all dressed in their Sunday finery, into the grandstand and up to that holy of holies, the Stewards' Box. Here I was introduced to many people who were obviously the cream of the island society. They were kindness itself, going to great lengths to make me welcome, to explain the finer points about the racing and even to tell me, with some justification, which horses to back on the Tote.

From our point of vantage we had a wonderful view of the whole course, of the crowds lining the rails opposite and those in the various stands beneath us. Here, certainly, was an event in which every class, race and creed participated, for there were East Indians, Chinese, full-blooded Negroes, whites, and countless combinations of race and ancestry which provided every shade of colour from jet black to a delicate gold. The West Indians have a nomenclature all their own to identify these different shades, including “light black”, “high brown”, and that popular Trinidad character, the “red-skinned fella”. To the Trinidadian each has a precise meaning, but I must confess that, as an outsider, I never did quite get the hang of all of them.

The term “East Indian” denotes a native, not (as one might perhaps have supposed) of the East Indies, but of India proper, to distinguish him from the Negroes and from the South American and North American Indians. But, of course, as most of the East Indians were second or third-generation descendants of the indentured labour imported from India during the last century to replace the emancipated slaves, and as most of them have never seen India,

they have every reason to consider themselves true West Indians also. Since the division of the sub-continent the situation is doubtless further complicated by the fact that many of the East Indian West Indians (or, if you prefer, West Indian East Indians) have no connection with modern India, but are actually descendants of men who originated in what is now Pakistan.

Much of the agricultural labour on the big sugar, cocoa and citrus estates is still drawn from the East Indian section of the community, the Negro preferring the gay, sordid life of the city. Most of the Indians have maintained their ancestral way of life, speaking the languages of India, eating its food, retaining its customs and feasts, while both sexes continue to wear traditional Indian clothes. The Negroes, on the other hand, have retained nothing of their African origin except perhaps their love of rhythm. They know no African tongue or customs and (understandably, this) wear only European clothes, though, where colours are concerned, their taste is somewhat less conservative than that of the average white woman.

This fact was particularly noticeable as I surveyed the goodtempered, boisterous masses of people facing the grandstand. Most of the men were wearing white shirts and trousers, which, with their fine white teeth, provided a strong contrast to their happy smiling faces, the whole effect being most pleasing and colourful.

I noted with interest that many of the people queuing up to place bets on the Tote were youngsters—boys and girls hardly in their teens—who seemed to know exactly what they were doing and who produced sheafs of currency notes with a nonchalant air which made me conscious of the triviality of my own modest investments.

Through a lack of opportunity, this was, I remembered, almost the first occasion on which I had attended a race meeting, so that when I put my first dollar on my first horse I thought I was being

quite a dog. The youthful gamblers in the stands below making bets of $10 and more soon put me in perspective on that point.

Meanwhile, I was taken down to the paddock to inspect the horses parading for the next race, nodding (as I hoped) sagely as my companions indicated the finer points of the animals and gave me a bewildering resume of the form of the more likely runners. On the way to and from the paddock I was surprised to observe that all the gatekeepers were wearing the uniform of either the regular or the special police and that they were busily engaged in checking tickets for the various enclosures and opening and closing the gates for the passage of the horses and officials. This hardly seemed to me a proper use of uniformed policemen, and I ventured a remark to my companion on the subject. He informed me that it was the usual practice for the police to provide a large number of men for such duties at all race meetings, and that their services were paid for by the Turf Club. He then volunteered the information (inconsequentially, I am sure) that the Acting Chief Justice of the Colony and his senior Puisne Judge were also Stewards of the Trinidad Turf Club.

Having come from a land where the Chief Justice was something akin to the Deity, and other members of the High Court were verging on the immortal, this statement came as a shock to me. In Palestine the Chief Justice had hardly appeared at any social function below Government House level, and, as in all colonies, had ranked in the table of precedence second only to the Governor (or High Commissioner) himself. That I should have been introduced to him and his chief assistant and had not given them the respect and deference due to their rank filled me with dismay. And yet I hoped that they would understand that I could hardly be expected to guess that the two coloured gentlemen running a race meeting were also the two top members of the island's judiciary. As I stood at the back of the Stewards' Box, more interested now in watching these two officials than the actual racing, it seemed to me to be a particularly unfortunate combination of activity.

I must make it clear here and now that I do not suggest for one moment, either expressly or by implication, that this holding of office in the Turf Club affected in any way the ability or impartiality of these two gentlemen in their judicial capacity, but at the same time I know that my own attitude to them was undoubtedly coloured by this situation. In the dealings which I subsequently had with both of them in both capacities I know that, try as I might, my respect for the Acting Chief Justice and the senior Puisne Judge was, because of their connection with the Turf Club, less than it should have been and that, conversely, in my official business with the Stewards of the Club I found myself unable to ignore the fact that I was really dealing with the heads of the judiciary.

Judges, of course, with their trained minds, are frequently required, when considering the evidence before them, to direct themselves to ignore some of the facts of which they are aware because they are inadmissible; I have no doubt that these two gentlemen were able to follow this procedure when changing from one role to another. On the other hand, I, lacking their legal training, lacked also this ability.

But this was not at that time any concern of mine, and I therefore plied myself to the excellent tea provided by my hosts and went back to the mess tired and happy after my first day out in Trinidad, richer by a couple of dollars than when I had started out that afternoon.

Chapter 27

COLOURFUL CARIBBEAN

WHAT a strange and fascinating island this proved to be! Rightly is it called “Land of the Humming-bird” and “Jewel of the Caribbean”. It is an island of paradox; of poverty and plenty; of torrential tropical downpours, of impossibly blue skies and (except on the western side) incredibly clear blue seas; a land where not only do the birds speak French, but oysters grow on trees and crabs never go near the water; where, if you want a banana, you must ask for a fig. And there is even a place called Dry River.

English, the common tongue (and, in fact, the only tongue of most of the inhabitants) is spoken with an effective and picturesque disregard for the rules of syntax and grammar; the newly-arrived Englishman finds difficulty in understanding and being understood, and is likely to be reproached for speaking what is known as “deep English”.

At first you are somewhat startled to be greeted with “Good night!” when you meet an acquaintance in the street or are introduced to a stranger in a friend’s house, but on reflection you are bound to admit that it is more logical than the English habit of using “Good evening” on meeting and “Good night” only as a farewell.

“De telephone wan’ you, sah!” says the butler, having answered the ring. And the butler?—a buxom Negro lass, who will accept no less-exalted a designation, even though she may combine also the functions of cook and general factotum to the household.

In general these “butlers” are quite uninhibited; on one occasion

one of them burst out on to the gallery where we were being entertained to a pre-dinner rum cocktail and, thrusting under our hostess's nose a dish bearing uncooked fillets of red fish, obviously intended for our dinner, said in a loud stage whisper, "Dis fish doan' stink good, mum!" (And how right she was!)

Perhaps one of the most attractive local names, however, was that given to the vacuum flask, which was invariably known as "the icy-hot".

At first I tried patiently to explain to all and sundry that the correct term was "brand new" and not "new brand", but the polite surprise at my appalling ignorance, coupled with the obvious determination not to let me ruin their wide knowledge of the King's English, soon caused me to abandon my efforts, and in no time at all I was accepting—and, indeed, enjoying —the strange but intriguing phrases.

Port of Spain, the capital, is a city of robust good humour, of tremendous zest for living, of quick, uncontrolled tempers and of sudden violence.

Among the lower classes morals do not play an important part, but, nonetheless, the churches—and particularly the Catholic churches—are filled to overflowing for every service. People do not really see the necessity for the formalities of marriage: it is, perhaps, too permanent, too binding—and it makes it difficult when, by mutual agreement, one wants to change one's keeper and move on to pastures new, sharing out the children of the union according to one's inclination. It is something to be proud of to have the word "Legitimate" on one's birth certificate, but it doesn't matter in the least if one hasn't.

But when the Catholic Archbishop drives in state through the city his adoring flock, genuflecting as he passes, dash through short cuts to get ahead of him again in order to "ketch anudder blessin'."

At Pharmacy Corner or in Marine Square you can buy for a copper a fresh coconut, still in its husk. The obliging vendor skilfully removes the top with a couple of quick blows of his cutlass and you drink the sweet, cool milk from it on the spot, discarding the white meat. In the market you can buy shark or turtle meat, yams, plantains, breadfruit, pawpaw, cassava and many other strange foods. You can buy pigs' trotters to make into the famous Creole dish, sousse, as you can purchase already stuffed with heaven knows what, the shells of the landlubber crabs which seem mostly to live in holes in the cemeteries. The taste of these "crabbacks", or possibly of the pepper in them, never fails to bring tears of ecstasy to the eyes of the true Trinidadian. You can buy, too, for a few cents a dozen, the delicious little Trinidad oysters, fresh-picked from a boat at low tide off the trunks of the mangrove trees in the nearby swamps.

Between the Savannah and the foothills which mark the beginning of the Northern Range lies Government House, official residence of His Excellency and his lady, scene of many colourful ceremonies and brilliant festivities.

Governing a place like Trinidad is no sinecure, and the man who holds that office has to be prepared to take—and take with apparent good humour—all sorts of pithy comment, not only from spectators and passers-by, but also from the local Press. One recent Governor, Sir John Shaw, displayed a very keen and laudable interest in slum clearance, directing his attention primarily to that area beyond the Dry River which glories in the name of John-John. For his pains, of course, he was promptly dubbed Sir John-John, and the nickname stuck to him for the rest of his stay on the island.

His Excellency the Governor of Trinidad, Sir John Shaw, inspects a guard of honour

Adjoining the grounds of Government House are the Botanical Gardens, which contain a unique collection of tropical and sub-tropical trees, shrubs and plants from all over the world. They also contain—and this is perhaps of more interest to the average Trinidadian—the Bandstand where, every Sunday afternoon, the fine Military Band of the Trinidad Police gives public concerts

which are attended and appreciated by thousands of people, to many of whom it is the social occasion of the week. From time to time local talent gets an opportunity to sing or play with the band at these concerts, and it is said that Edric Connor made his first public appearance here under the baton of the popular Director of Music, Captain Rupert Dennison.

Trinidad was discovered by Columbus in 1498; his anchor, given pride of place, can be seen outside the Victoria Institute in Port of Spain to this day. Sir Walter Raleigh captured the island for England from the Spaniards in 1595, but we lost it —to the French —in 1676. With four ships of the line and a small military force, Sir Ralph Abercrombie retook it once and for all in 1797, capturing two and burning three Spanish men-o'-war in the Harbour in the process. One of the main thoroughfares in the city is named Abercrombie Street to commemorate this feat.

For many years the island was a happy hunting ground for the pirates who sailed the Spanish Main, and many villages, bays and creeks have names which bear witness to these past activities on the island. Carcnage, where the buccaneers used to scrape the barnacles and weeds off the hulls of their ships, is but one example.

Trinidad, then, is a place of strange contrasts—of laughter and tears, of splendour and squalor, of vivacity and vice, of calypsos and carnival, of steel bands and jungle drums, of strong drink and of coconut milk. And it is a land of inexhaustible supplies of pitch in the pitch lake, of valuable sugar and citrus industries, and of invaluable oil.

At the first opportunity the Commissioner of Police, Colonel Angus Muller, interviewed me and then took me off to the Red House, seat of the Legislature and headquarters of Government, to take the oath of loyalty as a policeman and also to be sworn in by the Colonial Secretary as a Justice of the Peace.

My new chief was like R. G. B. Spicer in that he was a product of

Ceylon Police and a disciple of Sir Herbert Dowbiggin. I found him a charming and efficient man, friendly and helpful, and full of sound views and information on the island and its people. He warned me that I should find a good deal of opposition to my presence, both inside and outside the Force, for it was felt very strongly in some quarters that any jobs which were going should be given to local men and not to outsiders from England. To a great extent I saw the force of that argument, but when I considered the matter I realised that there were two sides to the picture.

My new Commissioner told me that I was to take over the Special Branch—a post which, with my Palestine background, I felt was just my cup of tea. Before doing so, however, he wanted me to organise a first-aid display and competition in honour of Colonel Sir James Sleeman, Commissioner of St. John Ambulance Brigade Overseas, who was due to arrive in the Colony in a fortnight's time. I had kept up my first-aid training as far as possible, so I welcomed the opportunity to organise a show of this calibre, although I would have liked more time in which to get to know people first.

When the day came we entertained, in addition to our distinguished visitor, some 400 invited guests, for whose interest we put on a keenly fought competition, followed by demonstrations of various types of life-saving and methods of treatment and of transporting casualties. The whole show was interspersed with selections by the Police Band, and an excellent tea was provided. The weather on that particular afternoon was quite perfect, and as everything went off without a hitch I was satisfied with the results of my efforts.

In the course of making the arrangements for this function I made my first excursion on foot into the centre of Port of Spain, and thereby learned at first hand the sort of thing the Commissioner meant when he warned me of the preference for local men. Before I had covered much more than 50 yards of my journey I realised that I was being followed, at a distance of only a couple of paces, by two

burly Negroes. At the same time I became aware of their conversation also, for it was obviously directed at and against me, and was intended to reach my ears:

"Look, man, anudder white bastar' come out from Englan' to live on de poor black man's back!"

"Yeah, man! Anudder English bastar'—he do wan' to drink de poor black man's blood!"

I thought I'd seen everything in Palestine, but this was something quite new, and there was nothing I could do about it. The remarks continued throughout my walk, becoming more and more personal, but fortunately I was able to see the funny side of the business and to keep my temper. It was a sharp lesson to me that the Trinidadian was no respecter of persons or of uniform—a fact of which I had evidence on many occasions during my stay there.

In the offer of appointment to Trinidad which I had received from the Colonial Office it was stated that, in addition to the salary mentioned, I should be provided with free quarters or an allowance in lieu. It transpired that this was a mistake, for no other officers of the Trinidad Police received such an allowance, and those who occupied Government quarters had to pay a percentage of their salary as rent. When it became known that I was on these special conditions my brother officers intimated to Government that, if this privilege were granted to me, they also would demand it.

The result was that the matter was reported in full to the Colonial Office, and a few days later a despatch was received from London explaining that the inclusion of this condition was an error and that the Secretary of State was obliged to withdraw it. I was invited to accept an immediate transfer to West Africa,where comparable conditions could be arranged.

I was not keen on West Africa, and before being appointed to

Trinidad I had turned down several lucrative offers of posts in that area. In addition, I had already purchased a car, a radio and a refrigerator in Trinidad; to sell them again so soon would entail considerable financial loss. I therefore notified the Secretary of State that I would waive the clause in my appointment which stated free quarters and hoped that, in the circumstances, he would make a passage available to enable my wife to join me as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, I reluctantly transferred from the mess, in which I could afford to live no longer, to a Creole boarding-house near the Queen's Park Oval, where the International and Intercolonial Test Matches are played.

I soon found that the usual Creole food was a poor substitute for the English cooking to which I was accustomed. With the war still on, potatoes were a rarity, and their place was taken by yam, breadfruit, plantain, sweet potato and other local vegetables, all of which, to my conservative palate, seemed thoroughly insipid and unappetising. In consequence, I was more than delighted to hear from my resourceful wife in England that she had secured a passage out and would sail at the end of April.

In March I was transferred from the Special Branch to take command of the Port of Spain and North-western divisions— the most exacting and onerous police job in the country if it were done properly—and by the time my wife arrived I had lost nearly a couple of stone in weight.

Because of my earlier co-operation in the matter of free quarters, Government made a "new brand", furnished, three bedroomed bungalow available for us and I was able to get this ready for occupation by the time my wife arrived. She promptly set about putting some more flesh on my bones, getting me fit again and ready for the hard work ahead of me.

In my new post I was personally responsible for the running of a

dozen police stations in the city and the surrounding country. To help me I had two Assistant Superintendents, one of whom looked after the administrative and financial side of the division, while the other was fully occupied prosecuting before the lower courts.

The two largest police stations each had as many as 1,000 reports a month to record and investigate in more or less degree, according to their substance. Some of them were frivolous (like that of the woman who came in to complain that her husband was always wetting the bed), but it was an unbreakable rule that each had to be recorded.

I made a point of visiting all my urban stations at least once each day, seven days a week, and the rural stations about twice a week, checking on each occasion outstanding reports and files of criminal cases to ensure that all necessary action was being taken.

In addition, I had a vast amount of office work to deal with at my headquarters and the investigation of all crime in my area to supervise. I invariably visited immediately all scenes of crime and, in consequence, the occasion when I had a night in bed without being called out or even telephoned was a rarity indeed, for crime was a commodity of which there was never any shortage on the island. I generally managed to get home for most of my meals, but practically every evening and all day Saturday and Sunday I spent in the police stations, checking and supervising and directing action in outstanding cases.

The rank and file of the police themselves were outstandingly efficient, and I say emphatically that nowhere in the world have I met such a high standard of police ability in relation to the standards of the general public, nor such devotion to duty in most arduous conditions.

As in most Colonial police forces where there is no serious political unrest or wide-scale disturbance, the number of police available was quite inadequate for the amount of work to be done.

Apart from one which was completed after I had been there a year, there was no police station in my area which had been designed and built as such; they were all converted private houses to which bits and pieces had been added as and when opportunity arose and there was money available. In these singularly unattractive buildings the station sergeant and all his men spent the greater part of their lives, except when they were actually out on duty.

The sergeant would have a room to himself and—if he were very fortunate in his posting—might even have a small apartment in which he could house his wife, but the constables all lived in dormitories and were only allowed out other than on duty if they were able to get a pass from the sergeant for a couple of hours off. Once a fortnight, perhaps, and sometimes even once a week, each man would be allowed a night off to go home to his wife, but the rest of the time they lived lives of enforced celibacy.

Those who were not actually out of the station were on call twenty-four hours a day, sergeant included. Indeed, the sergeant would spend the whole of his waking life in the charge office, going to his quarters only to get food and to snatch some sleep. And yet, even with these unusually stringent restrictions on their liberty, few of the men ever complained. Theirs was undoubtedly the hardest job (and the job demanding by far the longest hours) in the whole island, but it was also one of the most sought after. The smart police uniform carried with it a good deal of prestige, and for good men the force offered security and prospects of advancement to positions of responsibility in Government which would not otherwise be open to them; the work, too, was both varied and interesting.

As I got to know my men I was quite amazed at their knowledge of police matters—of the criminal law, the laws of evience and of criminal procedure, and of the many snares and traps which the “wide boys” of the community set for them. It is a good old

Trinidadian pastime to try to get a policeman to arrest you inadvisedly or through a mistake in identity: you can always bring a civil action for wrongful arrest and false imprisonment and, with any luck, the Court will award you handsome damages at the expense of the luckless policeman.

They say that a country always gets the police force it deserves. If that is so, I don't know what Trinidad had done to deserve the force it had when I was there. There were some wrong 'uns, of course, who got in (though generally they didn't last very long), but as a whole the community did little to warrant the existence of such a fine body of men to maintain law and order in the island.

With the exception of half a dozen or so East Indians, the force from inspector downwards was composed entirely of Negroes. There were no Chinese policemen, and apparently police work had little appeal to this section of the community. Apart from one Negro Assistant Superintendent (Mr. A Johnston, a man of sterling character and a great credit to his race) who was my prosecuting officer, all those above the rank of inspector were white. Latterly, however, I am delighted to say that a number of Negroes have been commissioned, and one—Eustace Bernard, a protege of mine to whom I gave accelerated promotion from corporal to sub-inspector—is now the first Negro Superintendent in the island and is doing exceptionally well, I hear.

The force will be the better for this transfusion of new blood in the upper ranks, for this promotion is no lip-service to the abolition of the colour bar (as is sometimes said in regard to such promotions in West Africa), but is the appointment of men to posts of responsibility which they have earned and for which they have every necessary qualification.

Trinidad is an excellent example of a place almost without a colour bar, where people with skins of every shade and hue mix on terms of equality; what discrimination there is is against the man who has no drop of coloured blood in his veins.

To me this is a sobering thought. Is it the shape of things to come? I think it may be. The coloured races have always had numerical superiority, but the whites have had the education, the science, the machines—if you like, the know-how (horrible word). Now, with our assistance, the gap between our techniques and theirs is fast closing, but with all the resources of modern medicine available to them, the numerical superiority of the coloured races is becoming even more marked.

Very often we have an unhappy knack of being condescending when we mean to be kind—of conveying by our tone and our manner a smug complacency at our own (to us) obvious superiority —which, while we might not express it in so many words, is yet very real to the foreigner. This trait in our character has contributed perhaps more than any other factor towards the decline in our prestige in the world outside. And very often, too, we adopt this attitude subconsciously, I believe, to anybody who was so unfortunate as to have been born outside the British Isles. Or should I say outside England, for do we not, in lesser degree, treat the Scots, the Welsh and the Irish in the same way?

Only recently I was a guest at a famous establishment in England at which a coloured friend of mine had been attending a course of training. I was discussing his progress with one of the staff, who said, “Oh, yes. He’s a very level-headed chap. When he comes into my office of a morning I say to him, ’Hallo, you bloody nigger. What do you want?’ and he just smiles and never turns a hair.” The speaker meant outwardly, of course; he had no way of knowing what was going on inside. What could the student do or say, anyway? But do you think he liked it? Would you? And do you think he will ever forget it? He probably thinks this was the one honest member of the staff displaying the general attitude towards him, the others being too deceitful to let him know what they really thought.

He has been here, has seen us at work and at play on our home

ground, and has now heard what he must believe to be the real feeling of the white man towards his race.

What, then, lies ahead of our children, in a world which must become increasingly dominated by people whom most of us have looked upon as basically inferior to ourselves ? In their ascendancy will they proffer to us in practice the hand of comradeship and partnership which we now extend to them largely only in theory?

Will our descendants, in the years to come, accept them not only as brothers, but also as brothers-in-law?

Chapter 28

FISHING AND LIFE-SAVING

With all the work I had on my hands in Port of Spain I had little time for recreation or relaxation. Occasionally I would snatch an evening off to take my long-suffering wife to a cinema, making up for the time thus lost by visiting some of my police stations after I had taken her home.

About once a fortnight we would dash out to Macqueripe for an hour's fishing; we were rarely able to get away in time to arrive there much before half-past four or five, and it was always dark soon after six, but those short fishing excursions were some of the most enjoyable moments of my life. We were by no means past masters at the art—indeed, we were the veriest tyros—but the thrill of feeling the line snatched through our hands by some unseen finny monster which we might or might not succeed in landing was something neither of us will ever forget.

Macqueripe is a delightful bay on the rocky north coast of the peninsula which stretches westwards towards the Dragon's Mouth or Bocas, the narrow channels between the small islands which separate Trinidad from the Venezuelan coast. By car Macqueripe is about a dozen miles from the capital arid is perhaps the most attractive of all the beautiful bays which line the shores of the peninsula. Shaped like a horseshoe, there is a perfect beach in the centre, while rocky outcrops line each side, merging with the lush tropical vegetation of the steep hills above.

Before the war this had been one of the most popular resorts of the island's social set, and the luxurious hotel at the top of the cliffs above the beach was the scene of many gay parties and balls.

During Lease-Lend, however, in its hour of need the British Government swopped the whole north-west corner of the island for fifty obsolete American destroyers and thus, when the U.S. Navy moved in to establish their home at Chaguaramas, many of the wealthy Trinidadians found that they had lost for ever their week-end holiday homes.

The whole area of the new naval base was wired off from the rest of the island, and quickly many of the erstwhile pleasure beaches were covered by installations of various kinds.

Macqueripe escaped this fate, but it was within the perimeter of the American base. The hotel was taken over as an officers' club and the bay itself as an officers' bathing beach. A kiosk was erected right on the beach and did a roaring trade in hot-dogs and hamburgers, cooked before one's very eyes, with Cokes and an iced chocolate drink to wash them down.

As a police officer I had entree into the base and a standing invitation for my wife and myself to use Macqueripe Bay.

A fellow officer in the police, Tom Ogier, had initiated me into the mysteries of fishing from a ledge of rock halfway along the side of the bay, and when my wife arrived I took her down to try her hand at it. She had never fished before, but, after catching three snappers weighing between 4 and 6 lb. in the first hour, she became as enthusiastic a convert to the piscatorial art as I was myself.

Sometimes we went home with little to show for our efforts, but generally we could expect between 10 and 20 lb. of fish for our hour's catch. Owing to the difficulties under which we were fishing —and we had to use a hand line, as there was no room for a rod, and we had neither net nor gaff—we often failed to land the bigger fish; I think the most exciting of these was a shark my wife hooked on a 30-lb. line and succeeded in playing to the rocks below us.

That day we had a friend with us—a Colonel in the Royal

Engineers who was living with us at the time—and by our combined efforts we managed to lug the shark out of the water and halfway up the sheer cliff below us. Then it gave a mighty wriggle, snapping the line as though it were cotton, falling back into the sea and away. Perhaps, in the circumstances, it was just as well; with three of us on the tiny, ledged rock there was hardly room to move, so I can't think how we should have fared if we had had to share it with a shark. The thing must have weighed every bit of 50 lb. and we had nothing with which to give it a *coup de grace* except the small knife we used for cutting up the bait.

The tall iron gates at the top of the path leading up from the bay were locked soon after six each night, by which time everybody was expected to be off the beach. It frequently happened that, too engrossed in the sport we were having to notice the descending dark, we found ourselves locked in the bay. When this happened, rather than shout for help to get us out (which we could hardly have done more than once, anyway) we used to climb over the gate itself—a precarious and dangerous business at the best of times. The gate swayed dizzily from side to side and, with the noise we could not avoid making, I was always expecting to get an American bullet at me. However, we were never caught, and I used to listen with an ill-concealed grin when the Provost Marshal was telling me how good their security arrangements were at the Naval Base.

On one occasion we tried our hand at fishing from a rowing boat off Maracas, a bay farther along the coast outside the American base. The owners of the boat—a couple of Negro fishermen—came with us, but as they themselves always fished with nets they were not much good at finding the best places for line fishing.

We had only landed a couple of catfish when the time came for us to row back to the beach if we were to get there before dark. As they rowed us past a rocky promontory which dropped sheer into the water one of the boatmen remarked that they had sometimes seen a large grouper lurking round these rocks. I had with me a

very strong line—a rope, almost—which I carried in case there were big shark about, and this was already fitted with a strong wire brace and a large shark hook about 8 inches long. I had heard tales of huge groupers, and I knew that they could weigh many hundreds of pounds, but I had never seen one.

I told the boatman to stop and quickly baited the hook with a complete catfish. I lowered it carefully over the side and waited hopefully. Five minutes later it was practically dark and there had been no sign of anything. I told the boatmen to row for the shore and I pulled in the line. Just as the hook with the catfish broke the surface there was a flurry in the water just beneath my hand, followed immediately by a bump on the bottom of the boat which almost made my teeth chatter.

I looked at the catfish on the hook and saw that most of it had been pulled off even as it left the water. I quickly added the second catfish to the remnants of the first on the hook and threw it overboard, much to the consternation of the fishermen, who seemed thoroughly scared.

I took a couple of hitches of the rope round the prow of the boat, but before the bait could have reached the bottom it was taken; the line tautened with a twang and, to my horror, the bows of the boat were pulled steadily down into the sea. As the water rose up the outer planking and started to pour in over the gunwales I tried desperately to pay out more rope, but I found I had put the end with the hook on it on top and that the dead weight pulling it down was holding the hitch absolutely secure.

Frantically I felt for my knife to cut the line, but before I could find it the rope suddenly went slack, the boat shot up out of the water again, and I went over backwards on top of the men behind me. I pulled the line in quickly before we could get any more such bites, and was shaken to find that the hook—which was as thick as my little finger—had straightened out as though it were a bent pin. I am sure wo all heaved a sigh of relief when the boat grounded on

the beach, and we were able to wade ashore in the darkness, for it was not unknown in this area for a fish to attack and destroy a small boat.

The old fisherfolk of the island still talk with bated breath about the gigantic Maman-balaou, the local name for the great sailfish which, at the turn of the century, completely destroyed several fishing boats, killing all their crews.

This particular fish carried on a reign of terror around Taitron Bay and Scotland Bay which lasted for weeks. Eventually all the forces of the fishermen were mustered and a flotilla of boats set out to hunt down the killer. He was located and attacked near Pointe Rouge, where he received two harpoons which hardly seemed to affect him at all. Shortly after another boat got in two more harpoons, followed almost immediately by another three from a third boat.

With seven harpoons in him the giant fish churned the surrounding sea into a crimson maelstrom and leapt clean out of the water on top of one of the attacking boats, smashing it to matchwood and at the same time transfixing the leader of the boat on its long beak.

The monster's blood had already attracted to the vicinity hordes of predatory fish, including numbers of the voracious spotted shark, but he was still far from finished. With a round dozen harpoons in his body, he set off at high speed towards Chaquaramas Bay, towing no less than five heavy fishing boats behind him as if they were toys.

Heading straight for a large floating dock, he crashed into it at full speed, breaking off about 6 feet of his beak in the process. This impact shook the dock from end to end and evidently stunned the fish, for he turned and swam slowly towards the shore, where he became stranded in a narrow channel.

Thus, after a tremendous fight, the “Terror of Pointe Rouge” met his end, and for days afterwards his huge carcass provided a popular spectacle for the residents of the city, who streamed out in their thousands to see it. Reliable observers estimated his weight at between 4 and 5 tons and his beak as being 12 to 14 feet in length. The like of him has not been seen since round the islands, but the Trinidad fisherfolk know better than to treat stories of big fish lightly.

Apart from our fishing expeditions, our main relaxation at this time was a rubber of bridge. Generally we played with our next-door neighbours, who were equally keen and whom we knew well enough to be able to ring up and suggest a game without notice. Occasionally we invited people to dinner and bridge or accepted a similar invitation ourselves, but my availability for such engagements was so uncertain that my wife was reluctant to put herself in the position of having to ring up at the last moment to say that we were unable to come.

One evening I shall always remember was an occasion when our hosts were the Solicitor-General and his wife.

I rang up the Duty Officer at Headquarters before we started and was told that all was quiet in the city, but just as we were in the act of sitting down to dine the ’phone rang and my host called me to take a message. I made my apologies to our hostess and offered to remove my wife, but they insisted that she stayed. If they couldn’t play bridge, they could at least sit and talk.

As my host accompanied me through the warm garden, heavy with the scent of frangipani, I told him the reason for my hurried departure: “Two fishermen have just come into St. James’ Police Station and reported that when they were wading out to their boat to set out for a night’s fishing they stumbled over the dead body of a woman in about 3 feet of mud and water. They say they’ve tied her to their mooring with a rope round her middle.” As a very senior legal officer —second only to the Attorney-General—he

realised at once that this was possibly a case of murder and must be treated as such until the contrary were proved.

I drove quickly to the spot on the low sea wall opposite which the fishermen's boat was moored. My Negro policemen had got there first, had already waded out up to their waists to the corpse and were now dragging it back in the darkness through the mud and water. I went to help them, trying to forget that I was wearing a new light-weight suit.

We got the body ashore and laid it on the ground behind the sea wall. I examined it by the light of my torch. It was that of a pretty girl in her early twenties, with a trim figure and a rich brown skin which denoted mixed European and African ancestry. She was wearing a flowered dress, but no shoes, and was plastered from head to foot with black slime.

There was no outward sign of injury; I felt her wrist and heart, but there was not a flicker of a pulse, and she was as cold as ice—much colder, it seemed to me, than the warm sea from which we had taken her. As it was already over half an hour since the body had first been found, I had not the slightest doubt that she was stone dead.

Following the successful competition and demonstration for Sir James Sleeman, I had been trying to instil into my men some of my own enthusiasm for first aid. Generally we had only each other to practise on, and it is difficult to create a proper atmosphere when injuries have to be simulated and symptoms inferred rather than observed. Here, while we were awaiting the arrival of the Police Surgeon, was an excellent opportunity to demonstrate artificial respiration in most realistic surroundings, and on a genuine corpse straight from the water.

We laid the body quickly over the edge of the low sea wall and pumped the water out—gallons of it, it seemed to me; then we put her down on her face, turned her head to one side and covered her

with the only jacket available—mine. I got down on my knees and began to give artificial respiration in the approved St. John's manner—exhale, inhale, out, in, press, release, out, in.

At the same time one of the constables was wiping the slime from her eyes, mouth and nose with my handkerchief, while others chafed her bare arms and legs to restore the circulation.

When I tired of my exertions another man took over, and thus we went on working, in shifts, until at last the doctor arrived. I told him that she had been in the water unconscious for at least half an hour, and that we had been treating her without result for a similar period. Shaking his head to indicate the hopelessness of our efforts, he knelt down beside me to feel her pulse, and as he did so a long, shuddering sigh racked the body under my mud-caked hands. Such was my astonishment, amounting almost to horror, that for a short moment I interrupted the steady rhythm of my work.

"Don't stop! Don't stop!" cried the doctor excitedly, and opened his little black bag to prepare an injection. Before he could administer it my "corpse" gave another, shorter sigh; I felt her muscles tense slightly under me, and saw her head turn from one side to the other. Then, hesitantly at first, but getting stronger every moment, I felt her chest fluttering of its own accord, and I adjusted my movements to fit in with her breathing.

With a mixture of incredulity and, perhaps, apprehension on their handsome black faces, and with the whites of their wide-open eyes gleaming more clearly than usual, my policemen renewed their efforts on her arms and legs, and before long we were able to load her on a stretcher and despatch her to the hospital.

I went home to change my clothes, and thence to collect my wife. My night out and my new suit had both been ruined, but on reflection I decided that to have brought a soul back virtually from the grave was well worth the price paid. It was my duty to have the girl charged with attempting to commit suicide, but because I felt

that she had already suffered enough I deliberately delayed doing so. Two days later she was gone, having slipped quietly out of the hospital during the night and disappeared.

She never thanked us for bringing her back to life. Perhaps she did not realise that she had been on the very threshold of the next world. Or perhaps, having suffered all the pain and anguish of death itself without actually achieving it, she felt that she had nothing to thank us for.

That was in 1946. I never knew what became of her, but I hope that, as a result of our first-aid practice on that starlit tropical night, she was able to overcome her troubles and has never again been tempted to throw away life's most precious gift—life itself.

Chapter 29

CARNIVAL AND CALYPSO

For the true Trinidadian the climax of the whole year is the Carnival on the Monday and Tuesday before Lent.

Carnival (pronounced with the accent on the last syllable) or "Ole Mas' " as it is generally called, in abbreviation of "Masquerade", is preceded by many months of planning and saving, of designing, purchasing and sewing.

Groups of friends or neighbours in numbers ranging from perhaps a score to well over a couple of hundred join together to form a "band". They meet to decide what part they shall play at the coming Carnival and then the most elaborate and expensive creations are conceived and executed on the agreed theme. It may be, for instance, Tutankhamen's Court, the Shah of Persia and his retinue, a scene from *The Arabian Nights,* or a party of Christmas-card Laplanders complete with sleighs. They may be Red Indians or Aztecs or Anna and the King of Siam, or Thunder-birds. The amount of ingenuity displayed in devising these themes and then creating the many and varied costumes around them is quite extraordinary.

There is nothing amateurish about them—nothing but the best quality of silks and satins is used in the costumes, and any of them selected at random at any Trinidad Carnival would walk away with the prizes at a fancy-dress ball in England. And so they should, for most of them have cost the wearer all of two months' salary in materials alone, apart from the many hours of hard work spent in making them.

These costumes make their first appearance early on the Monday

morning, when the many different bands parade the streets with their followers and participate in the competitions for the most original and elaborate themes, which are held both at Marine Square and on the Savannah.

At these competitions the bands really let themselves go. Historical scenes are enacted and embellished with a verve which defies description—Israelites cut the most extraordinary capers crossing the Red Sea, skaters in ermine-trimmed silks with snow on their boots skate gracefully on the broiling tarmac, a bullfight complete with matadors, picadors, toreadors, horses, bulls and many charming mantilla-clad spectators is conjured up from nowhere and mimed to perfection; while a fine contingent of Crusader knights, magnificently accoutred in chain mail, set about slaying the infidel with a realism which is little short of terrifying.

Most of the bands are led by their own group of musicians, hired at fabulous cost, playing the calypso of the moment.

At my first Carnival the tune was “Mary Ann”, a simple eight-bar melody which, with only the words “All day, all night, Mary Ann!” was indeed repeated all day and all night for forty-eight hours non-stop. To the rhythm of this music, masqueraders indulge in a peculiar sort of shuffle which they call “jumping up”. Fortified by frequent draughts of the local rum, most of them, like Mary Ann herself, seem able to jump up almost continuously all day and all night throughout the Carnival period with a staying power which is quite remarkable.

At odd times during the celebrations numbers of the “jumpers-up” are found lying unconscious in the gutters in their beautiful clothes, and these the police take to the station until they recover; on the whole, however, anything approaching effective police control of the processions is out of the question.

Nowadays the steel bands play a prominent part in the Carnival, but when I arrived in the island they did not exist. On the

declaration of V.E. Day the Trinidad Government decreed a public holiday, and all the people turned out into the streets to have a spontaneous “ole Mas’ ”.

There was no time, of course, to prepare costumes or hire musicians, so when one enterprising group provided themselves with tin cans and oil drums and started to create their own rhythm the idea spread through the city like wildfire. Every available can, pot, drum and tin was seized by the excited crowds and the resultant din was quite deafening. My own dustbin and its lid were early victims to the craze and, while at the time I felt a bit sore at the expense to which I was put in replacing them, I am proud now to be able to look back and say that I contributed materially (if involuntarily) to the birth of the world-famous steel bands.

The calypso season runs for some weeks before Carnival and it is the fashionable thing to pay at least one visit to the “tents” to hear the latest tunes rendered by gentlemen who revel in such fanciful names as Lord Invader, the Lion, Lord Kitchener and Mighty Spitfire.

Some of the tunes, like “Rum and Coca-Cola” and “Stone Col’ Dead in de Market”, are highly original and clever, but frequently one hears so-called new calypsoes in which both the tune and the words are but slight modifications of earlier versions.

The visitor to the island who has perhaps some claim to fame is frequently touched (in more ways than one) by the calypsonian who arrives outside his room at the Queen’s Park Hotel and serenades him with a song especially written for the occasion, in which the visitor’s achievements are recounted in some detail.

Actually, of course, “Trinidad” and “glad” rhyme very well together, so the context of the first two lines is not difficult to envisage; in fact, there is a skeleton calypso which is adjusted to suit the occasion, a typed copy of the words being handed to the visitor when it has been sung.

The following calypso, however, which relates to a local murder and is aptly titled, was one of the better ones, being both topical and original when it was first sung. As the reader will note, the number of syllables in each line is not important —the singer either gabbles them or draws them outx the important thing being that the last syllable of the line should be reached at the same time as the music:

The Body in the Bag

1

Listen to the news. . . .
Reading the papers, I was confused [repeat]
This is really a funny thing
I will like to know who killed Mrs. Singh.
It was a dreadful tragedy
How her body disappeared mysteriously.
Chorus: Who killed Mrs. Singh. I sure it ain't me
Who responsible for the dead body
She wasn't slaughtered in the abattoir,
But who did the job was a professional butcher.

2

It was terrible. . . .
After her return from St. Vincent
The following day she was found in a bag down at
Freeman's Bay.
I was also made to understand
That she was discovered by a fisherman.
Well, poor Mrs. Singh she couldn't make a note.
They cut her belly and her throat for her not to float.
Chorus: Who killed Mrs. Singh, etc.

3

It is very sad. . . .

Another unsolved crime in Trinidad.
We can't call this any suicide,
But we all know that murder can't hide.
And for this mysterious tragedy
We cannot put hands on anybody,
And we cannot mention any name at all,
But if the police work hard somebody will bawl.
Chorus: Who killed Mrs. Singh, etc.

4

The killer is at ease. . . .
But the C.I.D. still making enquiries.
They send for Scotland Yard to solve out the crime,
But in my opinion they wasting their time.
It is very good to be in society;
If it were I or you, they snatch we already.
They went to St. Vincent and Grenada,
But the killer is right in the area.
Chorus: Who killed Mrs. Singh, etc.

5

What a technical murder. . . .
It reminds me of Philbert, Payson, Bumper;
Bumper tie piece of iron around his waist
Threw himself in the sea and that was the case.
Well, friend, there is no reason to doubt
Mrs. Singh get in a bag and tie up the mouth,
And then she drove her own motor car
And threw herself in Oropouche River.
Chorus: Who killed Mrs. Singh, etc.

In addition to Carnival, horse-racing, soccer and netball, one of the most popular sports in the island is boxing, and while I was there professional meetings were held regularly at the open-air Mucurapo Stadium.

The Trinidadian always expects good value for his money, and will tolerate no half-measures where boxing is concerned. Any boy who failed to put up a good fight, therefore, or who, in the opinion of the crowd, did not display the required amount of guts, would be howled from the ring. In consequence, most of the contests were hard fought, the boxers making up in determination and sheer slogging whatever they lacked in skill.

The two top favourites at this time were Gentle Daniel and Ansel "Baba" Adams. They were both tough eggs, and Yolande Pompey, who has made a name for himself in England since, came from the same school.

The greatest event in the history of boxing on the island came when Joe Louis arrived in Port of Spain to give demonstrations with one of his sparring partners and with "Baba" Adams.

For my part, I was disappointed at the quality of the performance, but for the Trinidadian audience this was the one and only Joe Louis, World Heavyweight Champion for many years, and a coloured man like themselves.

For this meeting the promoter hired the Queen's Park Oval, erected a ring in the middle of the cricket field, built flimsy enclosures around it for the more expensive seats, and decided that the $2 customers should be accommodated behind the rails on the perimeter of the cricket field. This meant that there was a big stretch of unoccupied turf between them and the more expensive seats, and that they were too far away to sec much of what was happening in the ring.

I had every available policeman, both foot and mounted, on duty that night, but even so they were numerically insufficient to prevent the $2 customers invading the centre enclosures if they wanted to. I therefore overruled the promoter and announced over the loudspeakers that they could come up to the rear of the more expensive enclosures, but that if they broke through them the

boxing would be stopped. As the meaning of my words sank in there was a yell and the whole lot—many thousands of them—surged over the rails and across the turf to the enclosures. To my relief, they stopped there and settled down perfectly happily to take advantage of the better view they had been given. I had no trouble at all during the actual boxing, though just before Joe Louis was due in the ring I took a wicked cosh from a big Negro who was waiting beside the path the champion would take—it consisted of a coil spring 6 inches long with a lump of lead the size of a small egg at the end, and a loop for a handle at the other end. The whole thing was covered in beautifully plaited leather. One slight tap with that would have smashed any human skull— even Joe Louis's—like an eggshell, and I have often wondered since whether its owner had evil designs on the Champion; I can think of no other reason why he should have been hanging around there with that thing concealed in his hand.

Louis was using the changing-room in the Members' stand, and when the boxing ended the whole vast audience converged on the stand with the apparent intention of staging some high-pressure hero-worship.

I had expected this to happen and had placed a cordon of police inside the rails of the stand with instructions to throw back immediately anybody who attempted to climb the rails. After these instructions had been implemented successfully a few times the crowd gave up the attempt to get in and instead laid siege to the pavilion, making it impossible for us to get the Champ away without every bit of clothing being torn from his back for souvenirs.

After surveying the situation, I decided on a plan of action. With considerable difficulty, we managed to get a car driven round to the front of the pavilion and to keep clear a narrow passage between two rows of policemen leading from the fence of the Members' stand to the car. We could not, however much we tried, open a passage through the crowd to the main gate leading from the

ground to Tragarete Road.

At a prearranged time, I took Louis by the arm down the steps between the Members' seats as though we were going through the gate in the low fence to the waiting car. A loud cheer greeted his appearance, and I could see the eager faces all determined to touch him or, better still, grab his hand.

As we reached the bottom of the steps I gave Louis' arm a sharp pull and ran him to the left and down a narrow passage along the side of the pavilion to a small wicket gate leading to the main road.

As we burst out on to the pavement one of my inspectors drew up his car, the door swung open and Louis was in and away. The timing had all worked perfectly, but as an added precaution I had arranged for the big double gates leading from the ground to the road to be shut just at the moment I started to run with Louis.

The crowd howled with disappointment as they realised they were being tricked, and with one accord turned towards the gates to try to catch up with us on the road.

Such was the impetus of their rush that the now closed corrugated gates and the fence for some distance beyond were pushed down flat on to the pavement. Long before any of them could get outside, however, Louis was well on the way to his hotel, and the danger was over.

Chapter 30

TOBAGO HOLIDAY

We had two holidays during our stay in Trinidad—the first was a week in Tobago and the second, a year later, was when we spent another week on the tiny island of Kronstadt in the Gulf of Paria.

Tobago we found a most beautiful little island, inhabited by people far less sophisticated than the residents of Port of Spain. We travelled over by night in the little inter-island steamer which looked as though it had come straight out of a Jack London story of the South Seas.

My big American car was lifted precariously on rope slings and deposited on deck, where it spent the night surrounded by baggage of every description belonging to the other passengers. We had a neat and clean little cabin and, in spite of the noise and the heavy swell, managed to get a couple of hours' sleep before the all too short journey came to an end.

Once ashore we drove to the guest-house at which we were to stay; before we had even finished our unpacking, I was told that I was wanted on the 'phone. I took up the receiver wondering whether I might be recalled to Trinidad for some reason, but the caller soon reassured me on that point. The people of Tobago, he said, were renowned for their hospitality, as I had doubtless heard. He had learned of our arrival on the island that morning and he had hastened to telephone me to say that his wife and he would be delighted if we would give them the pleasure of our company on the same evening for bridge. We should not trouble to have dinner at the hotel, as they would see to that.

I accepted this very kind invitation with real pleasure, and thanked him warmly for his kindness. He gave me very careful directions as to how to find the house, and rang off.

At the appointed time we drove up to the house, and were somewhat surprised to find about a dozen cars parked outside. We were even more surprised when, on approaching the house, we found a table across the door with a lady sitting behind it. She collected y. from me for each of us and explained that it was for the funds of the local Catholic Church.

We went inside, our spirits somewhat dampened, and stood around for some time watching a couple of tables of bridge in progress. Our host then introduced himself and told us to make ourselves at home. He would try to get us a game of bridge later. After a while we managed to make up a four with a retired seadog and his daughter.

The seadog startled me by enquiring, as he studied his first hand, “Where do we go for honey?” I realised eventually that this was purely a rhetorical question, and that I was not expected to provide the answer, for he used it in precisely the same form, repeated ad infinitum, whenever he was cogitating what card to play. In the same way, whenever he played a three over a two, or a four over a three, he would always say, as one imparting a valuable hint to a novice, “Always cover an honour with an honour!”

An interesting and illuminating evening!

* * *

We loved Tobago—the magnificent scenery, the palm-fringed beaches, the crystal-clear water, the multi-coloured fish, the lush green hillsides and, indeed, its charming, friendly people.

I think that in all our travels I have never seen the equal of its

Man-o'-war Bay for breath-taking beauty. A retired police officer from Uganda had built himself a house on a promontory overlooking the deep blue waters of the bay, and had made himself a sort of unofficial squire of the surrounding area. He had the finest collection of deep-sea fishing gear imaginable— many hundreds of pounds' worth of heavy reels, rods, harness, lines of every strength and colour, and a bewildering assortment of hooks, weights, spoons, swivels, traces, nets and gaffs. He showed me his treasures with pride and affection; they all looked brand new, and when I asked him when he had used any of them last he appeared disconcerted and uncertain.

It seemed to me that for him pleasure lay in having the means to catch rather than the actual catching. I suppose it is analogous to the man who has an armoury of beautiful guns which he cleans with loving care, but which he would never dream of firing.

At Man-o'-war Bay one could readily believe that Defoe's Robinson Crusoe was conceived here, though the island was a good deal larger than I had visualised when reading the book. The setting was ideal, however, and I frequently found myself looking for Man Friday on the coral beaches. The parrots were certainly there, and so were the turtles, which came up out of the sea to lay their eggs in the warm sands.

Man-o'-war Bay, Tobago

It would be a brave man who would attempt to convince a Tobagonian that his is not Robinson Crusoe Isle.

* * *

Our second holiday, a year later, we spent on Kronstadt, a tiny island in the Gulf of Paria, of which we were the sole inhabitants.

Kronstadt is, in fact, the Governor's island residence, though at that time it was rarely used by him.

Three months earlier our daughter, Penelope, had arrived, having been born at the modern air-conditioned hospital belonging to one of the large oil companies at Pointe-a-Pierre in southern Trinidad. Penny was a Schwarz baby, of whom there are hundreds in Trinidad. Dr. Schwarz was a South African with revolutionary ideas on pre-natal care and obstetric anaesthesia. He would only accept expectant mothers who agreed to follow implicitly his directions about diet and exercise. Smoking was banned altogether, and any patient who disobeyed his rules was required to make arrangements elsewhere.

We made a monthly pilgrimage along the winding road to the south, past the Caroni Swamp, then on through the big fields of waving sugar cane, with the sugar refineries and their tall chimneys in the distance. Sometimes the fields were being burnt to get rid of the stubble, and when this happened there would be a black pall of smoke over the scene, with a steady fallout of charred fragments and scurries of snakes and rats crossing the road to seek safety elsewhere.

The month before the baby was due we were asked when we would like it to be born—had we any particular anniversary coming along with which we would like it to coincide? We had no such date to suggest, and therefore the doctor chose a Sunday when he had no other commitments so far.

On the appointed day we drove down for the last time, with nothing but the doctor's assurance to help us to realise that on the morrow we should be parents. I remember I was worried as to whether an incident the previous night might have an adverse effect on our unborn baby—we had been playing bridge with our neighbours when the cat had run in from the garden with a snake entwined round its neck, and had run under the table at which we were playing. I have never seen anybody move so fast as we did: the table and cards went flying, and I quite thought my wife—who hates snakes at any time—would have the baby on the spot.

However, she kept calm, and it was left to the doctor to be as good as his word. During the Sunday night he 'phoned the bungalow where I was staying to say that our daughter had been born.

But to return to our holiday. Looking back, I think we were somewhat rash to have ourselves planted on an uninhabited island with a tiny baby and no means of communicating with the mainland in the event of illness or other emergency. We had, of course, a supply of food with us, and we had arranged for a police launch to call every other day with supplies of fresh bread and

meat.

We had intended to swim off the tiny quay below the house, but every time we went to do so there was a large barracuda, fiercest of all fish, patrolling up and down just off shore. He turned a contemptuous eye on the baited hook I offered him, but I sensed that he would be galvanised into action if my wife or I were to tempt him with our own bodies as bait. We did no swimming.

One evening we accompanied a police launch on patrol and did some ground fishing out in the Gulf. My wife promptly landed four young hammerhead sharks one after the other, while I caught nothing. On another day, I borrowed a tiny dinghy from a passing fisherman and rowed out to do a little fishing while my wife cooked the lunch. This time I was more successful, and got a reasonable bag for supper. On my way home one of my oars hit something in the water a resounding thwack, nearly breaking it in half in my hand. Startled, I looked over the side to see a huge turtle swimming away as fast as it could go. By the look on his face, he was even more startled than I was.

We had Penny's cot in the bathroom leading off our bedroom. One night she cried, and I got up and went in to her. There was no electricity, but as I shielded my torch with my hand in order not to shine a bright light on her face, I noticed something move on the floor by my bare feet. I directed the torch towards it quickly and saw the biggest centipede I had ever seen anywhere. It was well over 1 foot in length and, with its legs, over 2 inches wide. I grabbed a nearby broom in my right hand and showered repeated blows on it; as I had to keep the light of the torch in my left hand focused on the thing I was not able to bring a great deal of force to the attack, and I appeared to be making no impression on its armour plating. Indeed, I seemed to be able to do no more than infuriate it, for it reared up and came at me.

Fortunately, my wife arrived at that moment to take over the torch, and I was able to despatch the creature with a few really

hard blows.

Centipedes do not sting or bite in the way most insects do, but their hooked legs are highly poisonous. I have always been told that the correct action, if one gets on one's bare skin, is to brush it off the way it is going, and then the legs will not stick in.

The only time I have had a centipede on me was at a very smart wedding reception at the big hotel in the heart of Port of Spain. I was sitting with a party of friends at a table in a paved courtyard when I felt an agonising pain on the inside of my thigh. I quickly dragged up the leg of my uniform trousers, and there was a tiny centipede not more than i inch long. I knocked it to the ground without waiting to look which way it was travelling (indeed, it seemed to me to be proposing to stay where it was) and trod on it. The intensity of the pain subsided almost at once, but within half an hour I had a lump the size of a tennis ball in my groin.

Even if the potency of its poison does not increase in direct ratio to its size, there seems no doubt that there would have been an urgent need for effective medical treatment if the thing had got into Penny's cot—and we would have had absolutely no means of getting it. There is certainly a lot to be said for not going too far from civilisation with young children.

The other most common and most dangerous poisonous insect is, of course, the scorpion, and here again, while I have killed thousands of them, I have only been stung by a baby. That was back in Palestine—during my tour in Jenin, in fact. I was about to get into bed one evening, and I put my hand into the bed in order to turn back the bedclothes. The scorpion—only about i inch long—had got there before me and stung the middle finger of my left hand. I felt nothing in my finger, but my whole arm felt as though it had been dragged out by the roots and the agony under my left breast was unbearable.

I was alone in the house at the time, but I managed to get into

my car and go up to the young doctor at the Army Camp. He had never seen a scorpion sting before, but he cut my finger with a razor blade in the time-honoured fashion, squeezed it to get it to bleed freely, and then applied neat pot. permang. crystals and a bandage.

I went back to bed, but in spite of the sedative he had given me I slept not a wink. At six o'clock I could stand the pain in my finger no longer, so I tore off the bandage. To my consternation—and to the doctor's when I showed him—the pot. permang. crystals had burnt into the flesh nearly to the bone.

I never want to be stung by a full-size scorpion nor, for that matter, centipede.

Chapter 31

LIBEL AND LAWLESSNESS

A few weeks after I took over command of Port of Spain Division I received a communication from the Secretary of the Trinidad Turf Club detailing how many policemen of each rank the Club would require for the forthcoming midsummer race meeting on the Savannah.

I replied in polite terms pointing out that it was my function to decide how many police were necessary to do any particular job and to make appropriate dispositions in the light of my other manpower commitments.

We had an excellent Special Constabulary, which practically policed the whole town in the evenings, and there was no objection to the Turf Club hiring members of that force (in their private capacity, of course, and out of uniform) to act as ushers and gate-keepers.

As might be expected, this did not get a very warm reception from the Stewards, but I had the full support of my Commissioner in this stand and no more police in uniform were used for other than police duties during the remainder of my stay there. After all, we were running a police force, and not a corps of commissionaires.

This was one example of the sort of problem which police officers in Trinidad had to face. Let me give another illustration.

In August, 1945, the following report appeared in one of the local papers. I have changed only the name of the man concerned:

"*Taunted Him.* Accepting his story that Major Morton had

provoked him, Mr. —— yesterday acquitted Jonas Kennedy on an accusation of disorderly behaviour.

"Admitting allegations that he made a noise in the cells, Kennedy told the magistrate that after he had been in the cell for two hours he was told that an officer of police wanted to see him. He went to Major Morton, who taunted him about thirty-nine previous convictions, and told him he would get another. Major Morton, Kennedy told the Court, referred to cuts in his head and told him he got what he deserved."

Two days later the following leading article appeared in an associated evening paper under the general title of:

"AS WE SEE IT

"Police Discourtesy

"Evidence given in a case of disorderly behaviour on Tuesday—and accepted by the presiding magistrate—revealed an incident involving a police officer which, to put it mildly, reflects most discreditably upon the Police Force.

"According to a report of the case, a man, after spending two hours in the cells, was informed that an officer desired to see him. He went as instructed, but soon discovered that the purpose of the summons was to give the officer the opportunity to taunt him about his past. The report contained no reference to any notice of appeal against the decision of the magistrate, who dismissed the charge, and it is therefore reasonable to conclude that the evidence tendered—and accepted—was not disputed by the police.

"Public Confidence

"It is regrettable that one, who from his rank—a major — must be a senior officer, should have resorted to such behaviour and we call upon the Commissioner in the

interest of the Force, to institute a full inquiry into the matter. We expect an officer of police to set a proper example to the men under him. Indeed, it is one of his duties to ensure that actions, such as that of which he was accused, are prevented, or, if discovered, adequately punished. If conduct of this sort is condoned, the effect on the public will be most unfortunate.

"The people of this Colony are solidly behind the police in all legitimate activities, but they will not stand for unjust treatment. If official action is not taken to avoid such incidents in the future, it will be difficult to expect the public to continue to discredit the numerous 'horror' stories which issue from those whose activities bring them into unpleasant contact with the police. . . ."

These attacks caused much comment in the island and, indeed, a good deal of criticism of the police in general and of myself in particular. On the facts as reported I could see that my alleged conduct appeared to warrant censure, though I was not at all sure that a man with thirty-nine previous convictions to his credit was capable of being taunted.

I therefore took the somewhat unusual step of putting the matter in the hands of my solicitor, and within a fortnight the following apology was published in both the morning and evening editions for several days:

"MAJOR G. L. MORTON

An Apology

"In the *Trinidad Guardian* of August 29th, 1945, we published two paragraphs, under the heading 'Taunted Him', having reference to Major Morton of the Police Force. And these paragraphs were followed by a leading article in the *Evening News* of September 1st, 1945, under the heading

'Police Discourtesy', which, after commenting on the same incident, made certain comments unfavourable to Major Morton (though he was not himself named in it).

"We are satisfied that these paragraphs were published under a misapprehension of the facts. It was wrong to say that the magistrate trying the case referred to accepted the story told about Major Morton by the defendant. And there was therefore no foundation for any reflection upon Major Morton.

"Similarly with the article. We deeply regret that it was ever published, and beg to tender Major Morton our sincerest apologies for it. There never was any foundation for the allegations made in it, and we hereby unreservedly withdraw every word which may in any way be taken to reflect on Major Morton's character or professional capacity. . . ."

I can best tell the story behind these paragraphs by quoting from my notes on the subject, made at the time. Again, only the names have been changed:

". . . On the evening of Sunday, August 19th, 1945, I was notified that a serious wounding had taken place at Ariapita Road, St. Ann's.

"I immediately went to Belmont Police Station, where I saw Tommy Pearson, age twenty, who told me that he had earlier chopped his stepfather, Jonas Kennedy, with a cutlass to protect his mother and fifteen-year-old brother from Kennedy, who was chasing them with a dagger and threatening to kill them. He had previously tried to interfere while himself unarmed, and Kennedy had stabbed him in the hand; only then had he armed himself with a cutlass.

"I took Sergeant Hoyte, Pearson and other police in my own car and proceeded to the scene, where Pearson pointed out where everything had happened. I interrogated personally all the neighbours and then went to Belmont Police Station, where I saw other witnesses, whom I also interrogated. I went into the matter as to whether a dying deposition from Kennedy was necessary, and decided that it was not. I gave instructions for a statement to be recorded from Kennedy in the hospital the next morning and then left for San Juan, where a murder had been reported in which the murderer had made good his escape.

"I directed operations on that case personally and eventually reached my home at about 7 a.m. The murderer was arrested shortly after by one of the patrols which I had organised.

"(It is my invariable practice to supervise personally the investigation of all serious crime in my Divisional Area, and I quote the above facts to show that my subsequent visit to Belmont Police Station to interview Kennedy, and concerning which much criticism has since been made, was not an isolated journey made for the purpose of provoking and taunting a prisoner, but part of my routine.)

"A statement was recorded from Kennedy in accordance with my instructions and forwarded for my perusal. It contained no reference to the attack made on him by Pearson or of the dagger with which he was alleged to have been armed; he stated, however, that the trouble was caused when his fifteen-year-old stepson, Gerald Pearson, 'show sign as though he wanted to attack me', the meaning of which was far from clear.

"You will remember that I reported the facts of this case to you personally; I informed you that I was reluctant to charge Pearson as all the available evidence pointed to the

wounding of Kennedy being inflicted by Pearson purely in immediate defence of his own mother and brother from violent attack by Kennedy, and there was nothing to show that it was felonious.

"I subsequently gave instructions that Kennedy was to be charged with the unlawful wounding of Pearson and with being armed with a weapon with intention to commit a felony on Pearson's mother and young brother, and that I was to be informed when he was discharged from hospital.

"On August 27th, 1945, I was informed by Sergeant Hoyte that Kennedy had been discharged and was now detained in the cells, having been arrested by warrant on the charges I had directed.

"At 8.30 p.m. that evening I went to Belmont Police Station to interview Kennedy in connection with the case against Pearson, in which he would obviously figure as the virtual complainant. At this point I desire to stress that throughout the interview I made no mention of the events relating to the charges which had been laid against him.

My intention was solely to try and clarify his original statement and to see whether any further information could be obtained to justify proceeding with the charge against Pearson.

"Kennedy was brought, and I asked him his name, which he gave me. I reminded him of the statement he gave in hospital, and referred to the part where he stated that his fifteen-year-old stepson showed signs as though he wanted to attack him. I asked him to explain what he meant by that. He did not answer my question, but started repeating, 'I am a law-abiding, a hard-working, peaceful citizen,' and demanding his right as such. (He was most aggressive throughout, and was obviously annoyed because he had

been arrested on leaving hospital.)

"I stopped him and said, 'Look here. It's no good you trying to tell me a story like that, you know. I've looked up your record, and I know you've got thirty-nine convictions, and many of them for violence; you're wasting your time.' I then asked him to show me where he was cut, which he did, talking in a loud and aggressive tone about how peaceful and law-abiding he was, and that I had no right to remind him of his previous convictions.

"It was obvious then that no useful purpose would be served by continuing the interview, as his attitude was most objectionable, so at approximately 8.35 p.m. I ordered him to be returned to the cells, remarking at the same time, 'It seems to me, my lad, that you got a taste of your own medicine.'

"I then proceeded to check through the station records, but Kennedy was shouting at the top of his voice in the cells to such an extent that it was impossible to carry on a normal conversation in the Charge Room. I sent Corporal Duncan on, I think, three occasions to warn Kennedy to be quiet, but to no avail.

"I then went to the cells myself and warned Kennedy that unless he quietened down I should have him charged for creating a disturbance. He then said, 'Why you tell me I have thirty-nine previous convictions?' I said to him, 'If you don't be quiet you'll have forty; now don't make any more noise.' He then shouted, 'You can charge me, but a black man will try me!'

"I returned to the Charge Room, and at 8.55 p.m., as the noise was still continuing, I gave instructions for a vehicle to be sent for to convey him to Headquarters and for him to be charged with creating a disturbance.

> "The vehicle arrived at 9.10 p.m. and left with Kennedy at 9.20 p.m., at which time he was still shouting. I left the Station at 9.25 p.m., having made a note of the incident in the Officers' Inspection Book.
>
> "The case was called the following morning, but although there was, in my submission, ample evidence available to justify a conviction, through a misunderstanding it was not led, and the case was dismissed for lack of evidence. . . ."

As for Kennedy himself, this was not the first occasion on which he had accused police of misconduct towards him, nor on which he had caused trouble in a police station; of his thirty-nine convictions, no less than six were for assaults on police officers!

The domestic strife which started his case, was, of course, a logical sequel to the pernicious system of "keepers", whereby family alliances are made and broken at will—whereby parenthood and wedlock are virtual strangers. The unhappiness of the children of such unions, caused by the absence of family life, and the hovels in which the majority of the population lived, joined forces with the cheap, potent rum and the warm, fine tropical nights to encourage the youth of the city to remain on the streets until the early hours of the morning.

In consequence, street-corner gangs played a prominent part in the life of the city, and outbreaks of violence and lawlessness arising from inter-gang feuds featured regularly in the crime reports.

Though knives, knuckle-dusters and coshes played their part, by far the most popular weapon was the "cutlash", a heavy, broad-bladed, razor-sharp machete intended for cutting sugar cane or a path through the jungle, but which was equally effective for splitting the skull of an enemy. Cutlashes were to be found in most households and were frequently carried through the streets hanging

in the scabbard from the belt. To many Trinidadians it was the tool of their trade, and it was therefore difficult for the police to differentiate between peaceful citizens going about their lawful business and those on mischief bent.

In these circumstances the evolution of the steel band came as a godsend, for it gave the young men a new interest in life and turned their energies into healthier, more creative channels. True, the inter-gang warfare became inter-steel band rivalry, and often led to violence, but it was less frequent than before, and was, I think, more easily kept under control.

But violence was not confined entirely to the street-corner gangs, and many savage woundings such as that which I have detailed earlier were the result of sudden passions and disputes between members of the same family. On one occasion in the Woodbrook area, I remember, I saw a hand with half a forearm attached lying in the gutter with the blood still running from it.

It turned out to be that of an East Indian. He had had an argument with his brother about a thoroughly trivial matter, and the brother, in a flash of temper, had picked up a nearby cutlash and severed his arm as clean as a whistle, and then had picked it up and thrown it into the gutter.

On another evening a henchman of a notorious young East Indian racketeer had been carrying a home-made bomb through the town, obviously with the intention of depositing it in the vicinity of one of his leader's rivals, when the thing went off prematurely.

I happened to be out on duty in the vicinity at the time and, hearing the explosion, drove to the spot. There was the bomb-carrier, staring with a look of mingled astonishment and disbelief at the two stumps where his hands had once been. That was a case of being hoist with his own petard, if ever there was one.

Another case which was for me a landmark (albeit not a very

pleasant one) of my stay in Trinidad started on the evening of December 5th, 1945. I was in Woodbrook Police Station at the time, checking the Report Book, when the 'phone rang beside me. I answered it and an excited voice informed me that some American soldiers were causing trouble and smashing up a private house at Peregod Road, Debe village, on the outskirts of the city. I gave instructions for the American Shore Patrol to be informed at once, and left for the spot.

On the way I picked up a patrol of two constables and took them with me. We had no difficulty in locating the scene, for there was a small crowd of excited people outside one of the houses in the road. They were all looking towards the house, and when we came up they pointed mutely towards the door leading from the gallery into the interior. There was no sound from inside, but as we went in I observed that the door was smashed.

We entered the living-room and there, stretched out on the floor in front of us, was the body of a young man in the uniform of the U.S. Marines. His head was lying in a pool of blood: I could feel no pulse whatever nor detect any sign of breathing.

I sent one of my men to telephone at once for an ambulance and a doctor, but before he could get to a 'phone the U.S. Shore Patrol arrived and sent a message to their Headquarters for medical help. An American doctor arrived on the scene very quickly, but his brief examination of the prostrate Marine confirmed my own opinion that the lad was dead.

By sheer misfortune, our own very efficient and co-operative police surgeon, Dr. de Freitas, was out of town that evening, and no relief had been arranged—a most unusual occurrence.

Never before had a member of the U.S. Armed Forces on the island met his death in circumstances which pointed to murder, so I sent a message to my Commissioner, Colonel Muller, reporting what had happened, and another to Headquarters for reinforcements. I

instructed one of my Assistant Superintendents, Louis Prcau-Hill, to get a Government doctor to the scene without delay; eventually, after contacting the Deputy Director of Medical Services (the Director himself was in hospital), a recently qualified doctor was detailed for the job.

This young doctor, who had just taken up his appointment as Government pathologist, examined the body where it lay and dictated his observations to Sergeant Eustace Bernard, who recorded them in his notebook.

After consultation with the U.S. Naval Authorities, it was arranged that the body should be removed to the U.S. Base Mortuary, and that the post-mortem examination should be carried out there the next morning by the American and the Government doctors jointly. This met with the approval of all concerned, including Colonel Muller, who had now arrived and was supervising operations.

Meanwhile, my team of detectives from the Divisional C.I.D. had swung into action and were interrogating everybody in the vicinity to get the true facts surrounding the death. Needless to say, drink was at the root of the trouble; there were several conflicting versions of the incident leading up to the dead Marine's entry into the house, but it was clear that both he and another Marine with whom he had come to the area had been under the influence of drink and were in quarrelsome mood.

It appeared that they were looking for a brothel which they believed to exist in the area, and decided—quite erroneously —that this must be the house. At this point the companion seems to have faded away, partly perhaps because of the belligerent attitude of his friend, with whom he had already come to blows. It was clear that when he entered the yard of the house he was by himself.

As to what happened from then on, we have only the words of the East Indian owner of the house to guide us until the latter

stages, when others, attracted to the house by the uproar, were able to add their own version of the incident.

This, then, is the house-owner's account of what happened, in his own words—an excellent example of the sort of English with which both the police and the courts had to cope!

> "Me and me wife was in the kitchen. She was frying fish, so this American soldier, I do not know where he came from, unexpectedly he came in front the kitchen. We didn't hear when he come.
>
> "When he come he stand up and said 'Hallo!' I said 'Hallo, what happen you?' When I tell he, 'What happen you?' he said, '—you!'
>
> "He came right in front the pot, stooped down and said 'What's cooking?' so we say, 'We cooking we little food.' He leave there, and I said to myself he must be going; so he move and went by the cow-pen and do as though he was going by the hollow. I then said the man drunk as though he go fall.
>
> "I took me flambeau from the kitchen and as I got back to the East side of the house I heard his voice down by the river. I then held the light so that he can see to come back up. He came through the bushes and returned to the kitchen and stood up.
>
> "I had some pieces of wood out there that we was cooking with and he took up a piece and said, 'If you follow me tonight I would kill you!' I got frighten. He passed up the back step, passed the bedroom and started to hit the doors and windows with the stick. He went into the drawing-room and began breaking the window-panes and cursing. He held on to the front door and broke off one side and throw it outside.

"I called out to some people asking them to run and call the police for me, when I see [masterly piece of understatement, this!] he was overdoing it.

"I called to him, saying 'Look here, man, look what you doing man!' and he said, '—you!'

"I was then standing in the yard and some people were on the road. When I see that he was going to break up my whole house, I pick up the stick he came into the house with because he pelt it at me in the yard. The blow hit me across the chest.

"I got vex and I take up the same stick and went up to him on the gallery and said, 'Joe, don't do that, man!' and he fired a kick behind me saying, 'Oh, you get out here—I will kick your arse out!' I said, '—, look what you do to my house and you want to beat me.' By the time I say so he fire another kick at me.

"I ran back to get away from it and the same headway, I hit him a frighten blow on the head with the stick and he fall down on the floor. I didn't know he was go dead. I didn't hit him any more and I leave him and walked outside and the same time them jeep come.

"I ain't fooling you. I didn't hit him to kill him, but after I hit him he dead. When I did come to the gallery he did bleeding from his head already. When he was beating out the door the glass burst and he got cuts on his face and head."

The first thing that did emerge from this and from other evidence which was forthcoming was that this East Indian householder and his family were perfectly respectable, hardworking, peaceful citizens and that they had done nothing to warrant this violent attack on their property. On the face of it, the

owner was justified in using any reasonable force to defend his possessions from further damage.

But let us see what story other witnesses had to tell about the amount of force used, and whether, in the circumstances, it was no more than was reasonably necessary to prevent further malicious damage to property.

A Negro girl who lived nearby gave the following version of what had happened:

"I was at home when I hear a loud noise in Perigod Road. I went to see what it was all about. On getting near this house I see a large crowd outside on the road. I went into the house and I see an American soldier sitting on the floor with his head in his hand resting on a bed; blood was coming from his head. The owner of the house had a piece of wood in his hand and was beating the soldier with it. In the room also were two girls; they were not doing any beating; they were saying, 'It good for him, nasty American soldier.'

"Just then another man who I believe is family to the houseowner, came into the house with a big stone in his hand and strike the soldier on the head with it. The blow went 'pox' and the soldier fall to the floor and the blood begin to come from his head like water.

"I then say, 'Oh, God! all you kill the man!' A Creole man who I know carries milk and who was also in the house said, 'Dead what? He only faking!' I say 'Faking? The man dead!'

"Another man held on to the soldier wrist feeling his pulse and say, 'He ain't dead.'

"The man who hit him with the stone say, 'Go by Mrs. Mootoo and telephone for the police. Let them beat him.' Someone left to telephone and afterwards the police come.

"I saw the owner give the soldier two blows with the stick, but it

is the blow which the other man gave him that kill him. The stone was thrown into the river by that man.

"When I arrived on the premises I see pieces of glass on the floor and the front door was open."

And another witness, this time a Negro youth, also attracted to the scene by the rumpus:

"When we got into the room I see the soldier sitting down with his head and hands resting against a mattress which was turned up on a small bed in the room.

"One man who I believe is family to the owner had a boulder in his hand. He strike the soldier on his head with it and the soldier fell backwards and blood started to come from his head.

"I heard the sound of the blow. It sound like when you clap your hands. He held the stone in his hand when dealing the blow and then he throw the stone outside. I would not recognise the stone again. After the soldier get the blow and fall he did not again move."

In view of this evidence, it appeared that, to say the least, some of the injuries he had received had been inflicted after he had ceased to be capable of doing further damage to the house.

The next morning the young pathologist was taken out to the U.S. Naval Base to attend the post-mortem on the Marine; on his return he telephoned me to say that the examination had taken place and that the cause of death was cerebral contusion, due to a blow on the skull. Later I received his written report on the post-mortem, in which this statement was confirmed.

On the day of the post-mortem examination the houseowner was arrested and charged with the murder of the Marine, and the day after similar action was taken in respect to the relative who was alleged to have hit the American with a stone.

In due course both men were committed for trial at the next Assizes, the house-owner on a charge of manslaughter and his relative on a charge of murder. The medical evidence as to the post-mortem examination and the cause of death was given before the examining magistrate by the young pathologist, and was accepted without challenge.

Before the case came up for trial at the Assizes the AttorneyGeneral, exercising the prerogative conferred on him by law, entered a *nolle prosequi* to the charge of manslaughter against the house-owner, and the case against him was accordingly withdrawn.

There is little doubt but that this action met with public approval, for the whole sordid business would not have happened but for the unwarranted and violent intrusion of the deceased into a private house, and it was generally felt that, all in all, he got no more than he deserved.

In March, 1946, the remaining case of murder came up for trial before the second steward of the Trinidad Turf Club in his capacity as Senior Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court. After the medical evidence had been heard, the judge directed the jury to acquit the accused on the grounds that the Crown had not established the cause of death. He then criticised the police for not having called as a witness the doctor who actually performed the post-mortem examination.

The learned judge's remarks, as reported in the *Trinidad Guardian* of March 19th, 1946, were as follows: "I would like to state this definitely and categorically. It was most improper of the police who conducted the case against this man not to have called the doctor who performed the post-mortem examination, because before a man can be put before a jury for murder, the cause of death must be ascertained. Here they had the man to ascertain the cause of death and for some reason or other they did not call that doctor. That is improper, and I make no hesitation in saying it."

This criticism, until I thought it over, astounded me. I had been in charge of the investigation throughout, and I was only too willing to accept full responsibility for the way in which it was done, but I could see no grounds whatever for the action which had been taken in Court.

In the first place, although I now learned that the young Government pathologist had not himself performed the actual post-mortem examination, he had been present all the time, and had had every opportunity to see everything that was being done, to ask questions, or to cause any further examination he might have considered necessary.

He had been informed in my presence the previous night that he would be required to give the medical evidence on the post-mortem, and on his return he gave me both a verbal and written report on the cause of death. There was, to my knowledge, no law or Court ruling that such evidence could only be given by the person who did the actual cutting—indeed, if such were the case, the medical evidence on most post-mortems I have attended would have had to be given by the mortuary attendants.

At the preliminary enquiry the pathologist's evidence had been accepted by the magistrate, who had the power to call any additional evidence which might have been necessary to ascertain the full facts. The same applied to the Attorney General, whose responsibility it was to prepare the indictment for the hearing before the Assizes and to brief counsel for the prosecution. At no stage was any query raised as to the competency and adequacy of the pathologist's evidence.

By the time the case came up for trial the naval doctor had returned to the United States, but the U.S. authorities would have been only too happy to get him back from any part of the world if they had known that he was required; if the Court had seen fit to order a short adjournment this could have been done.

On the other hand, if I had relied on the U.S. doctor for the medical evidence I should probably have been in trouble on that score also, for he was not on the Trinidad Medical Register and therefore his qualifications as a doctor could not be officially recognised outside the American Base.

The unexpectedly abrupt end of the trial fitted in very well with the hopes of the Trinidad public, but—as may well be imagined—the U.S. authorities took a very dim view of it, and strong representations were made in the very highest quarters in Washington and London on the subject.

For my part I put in a protest through my Commissioner (who supported me fully) to the Governor. This protest I couched in very strong terms, concluding with a demand for an early retraction of the criticism made by the judge.

I did not get it, of course, but neither did I get the sack, as I probably should have done had my protest not been justified by the facts.

Chapter 32

POLITICS AND TRADE UNIONS

My Trinidad story is nearly told, but I cannot pass on without some reference to the political set-up there.

At the time of my stay on the island there were both nominated and elected Members of the Legislative Council. Those nominated by the Governor were generally people of high repute, often scions of old Trinidad families, who had made their names in commerce, agriculture or one of the professions.

The elected Members were those who had been able, through their own personality, to fire the imagination of the great mass of the electorate and had, for the most part, been swept to victory at the polls on the crest of a wave of rhetoric. This does not mean to say that they were not able politicians—far from it, very often, where men like Albert Gomes were concerned. He was a vast mountain of a man, of Portuguese origin, presumably, with a face which could have brought him fame and fortune in Hollywood, playing roles of pirate chiefs and Mexican bandits.

But behind the flashing eyes, the big black moustaches, the heavy jowls and the swarthy skin lay a brilliant brain. He was a fine orator, with the power either to sway his listeners to his cause by the persuasiveness of his pleas, or, if necessary, to bend them to his will by the sheer force of his dynamic personality.

In office he proved to be a clever debater and an able administrator—reasonable, approachable and responsible—who would not give way to the mob hysteria of those on whose shoulders he had climbed to power, and who stuck to his own

principles at all costs.

Victor Bryan, a Negro (and, incidentally, an ex-Trinidad policeman), was another example of a fine politician, honest, forthright and unswerving in his principles. He had the advantage of having a charming and intelligent wife who was a great asset to him both in his political and family life, and did much good work in his constituency.

Another up-and-coming politician in those days was a Negro gentleman who went by the name of Tubal Uriah Buzz Butler. Butler (or Buzz, as we knew him) was the leader of the workers in the oilfields areas to the south of the island. He ran his own trade union and had his headquarters at a place picturesquely known as Frisco Junction, but he frequently came into Port of Spain to hold meetings. The first time I saw him was at a meeting in Woodford Square, when a bevy of Negro women dressed all in white and singing "Hosanna to the Highest!" were carrying him bodily to the bandstand from which he was to address the crowd. In Trinidad there is literally no limit to the enthusiasm you can whip up in your followers if you go the right way about it.

In January, 1947, these oil workers, out on a strike at Point Fortin, converged *en masse* on Port of Spain, where hundreds of them established themselves in the premises and yard of an unfortunate printer near Besson Street Pojice Station, and then set about trying to get the busand tram-drivers to join them in the strike.

To this end they put out strong pickets on every approach to the transport depot and did some pretty effective intimidating. We also were out in strength—at 4.30 in the morning— and we arrested many of the strikers whose picketing could not be described as peaceful.

A day or two later a mob left the printer's premises and marched towards the centre of the town. The time was 8.30 a.m., and both

the Commissioner and I were at breakfast in our respective homes, having been out since 4 a.m.

Adequate reserves of police were standing by at Headquarters, and when news of the demonstration was 'phoned in by the Special Branch men detailed for just such an emergency, the officer in charge set off in trucks with his riot squad to deal with the situation.

Unfortunately, they got caught in a traffic jam in the town, and played no further part in the proceedings. Unfortunately, too, through disobedience to instructions, neither the Commissioner nor I were notified of what was happening.

Meanwhile, the procession advanced by another route on the Red House, the seat of Government, situated between Police Headquarters and Woodford Square. As the mob reached the Red House I drove up on my way back from breakfast and was horrified to see the strikers swarming all over the Government offices.

The Commissioner arrived at the same time, and we quickly organised parties of police and chased the strikers out of the Red House and into the road between it and Woodford Square. Here they were joined by many hundreds of others—the usual people who join in any disturbance just for the fun of the thing, apparently—and for some time we were unable to budge them at all.

The Commissioner read—or attempted to read—the Riot Act and received a cut on the cheek from a flying bottle for his pains. I then led what was intended to be a baton charge, only to find that I was the only one taking part in it. The trouble was, of course, that our main striking force, highly trained for just such work, was still somewhere in the town, cut off from us by a traffic jam, and the ones we had left were the clerks and orderlies from Headquarters, whose training was not all that it might have been.

By the time I discovered that my baton charge was a oneman

effort, I was seized bodily by three brawny Negroes, lifted off my feet and thrown face down on the ground, where one of them tore the back out of my tunic while the others started to beat my very prominent nose on the pavement.

Fortunately for me, Colonel Muller saw my predicament, drew his gun and shot one of my assailants through the thigh, thereby gaining me enough breathing space to get back to the comparative safety of the police cordon, my nose bloody but unbent. Eventually more police arrived with tear-smoke grenades, with which we were able to disperse the mob into and through Woodford Square.

The score, when the tumult and the shouting died, was fifteen policemen injured and thirty-two arrests made.

A couple of days later we raided the printer's premises in which the strikers were squatting. I personally made all the arrangements for this raid, timing all police movements so that the several bolt-holes at the back and sides of the premises were closed from outside by men armed with rifles and fixed bayonets at the same instant that the main party of police arrived at the passage leading from the street to the yard.

The Commissioner had said he would like to come along as an observer, making it clear that he would in no way interfere with my plans for the raid.

As we got to the entrance to the passage our progress was checked by a veritable fusilade of bricks and stones and bottles, and it was obvious that large stocks of these missiles had been accumulated for just such a purpose. More serious still, we were met by a volley of shots, one of which wounded the Commissioner in the upper arm.

Eventually we managed to force our way in through the hail of bricks and I ran, gun in hand, up the wooden steps leading to the large room which occupied the whole of the upper storey and in

which we hoped to find the leaders. Alas, the birds had flown, though they must have left before the raid started.

After the initial delay we quickly got the occupants under control, and only then was I able to persuade Colonel Muller to go back to have his arm dressed; even then he did so only with the greatest reluctance.

Not a single man or woman escaped from our trap, and our cells at Headquarters and in the various police stations were stretched almost to bursting point to accommodate them all. Many of them had sore heads that night as a result of their encounter with the forces of law and order. There were some sore policemen, too.

Charges were preferred against those who could be identified for specific acts of violence, but the next day the majority of them were sent back in bus loads to their own areas and told to stay away from the capital.

The next day, too, some of the English papers published lurid stories of the raid, one in particular starting a campaign against the Commissioner, whom it dubbed “Two-Gun Muller”, based on a highly inaccurate account of him dashing up the wooden steps into the big room with a gun in each hand shouting, “Where’s Butler?” Actually he never went up the stairs at all. I did, but I only had one gun, and I certainly did not shout “Where’s Butler?” when I got to the top.

Two days later, and Port of Spain was its usual lusty, noisy self, intent on its steel bands, its rum-drinking, its cinemas and the approaching Carnival.

* * *

We were eligible to go on leave in the summer of 1947, and I must say that after such a strenuous tour I felt myself to be in need

of a good rest.

Passenger ships were scarce and passages hard to come by, but to our good fortune a friend of ours who was the Norwegian Consul was able to arrange for us to be signed on as members of the crew of a Norwegian tanker which would call at Port of Spain for water before sailing to a port in Venezuela to load with oil for Norway.

We had every reason to believe that we should be returning to Trinidad, but a fortnight or so before we were due to leave we were informed—through high official sources—that two members of the Stern Gang were on their way from France to Trinidad in order to avenge the death of their leader.

Passenger ships, as I have already said, were few, but Piarco Airport was already one of the major aerial crossroads of the world, and a constant stream of passengers from every corner of the earth were coming into the city each day to spend a few hours or a night while waiting for their onward connection.

Adequate security checks, therefore, were impossible without putting a lot of innocent passengers to considerable inconvenience, so that from that angle I was not sorry when the time came for us to leave the island. At least, I thought, there would be time for the situation to clarify while w e were away.

It was permissible to let one's Government quarters during one's absence on leave, and this I did, leaving all our possessions for the use of the new tenant, a Colonel who was also O.C. Troops for the island.

We left Trinidad with real regret. We had had much frustration and misunderstanding during our tour, and had been subjected to many injustices, but the island was beautiful and the city, full of slums though it was, had character and atmosphere which we had grown to love. For the people, too—or for most of them—we had conceived a sincere regard, and we found their habits and ideas

frequently original and thoughtprovoking.

We had made many good friends and some enemies; I had, I knew, the unswerving loyalty and—I truly believe—the affection of all the men who had been under my command. In turn, I had always given my own Chief, Colonel Mullcr, my own complete loyalty, and I had come to hold him in the highest esteem, both as a police officer and as a man. He had had many difficulties to overcome and many problems to face, not least of which concerned the loyalty of some of his own officers, but he had always shouldered his responsibilities squarely and in quiet confidence.

From him I had learned much, including the value of keeping calm and unruffled when all the cards seem stacked against you.

We sailed, then, for Venezuela and Le Havre, myself as a supercargo and my wife and baby Penelope as stewardesses. I must say that none of us found our duties arduous; indeed, my most exacting task was perhaps teaching the Captain to play contract bridge. As he called—and made—a grand slam in the first rubber he played, even that duty was by no means difficult. For the rest of the trip he was known as “GrandSlam” Turgesson.

He and his officers and crew were kindness personified, and nothing was too much trouble for them. Apart from two Norwegians (the stepdaughter of Kirsten Flagstadt and her husband), we were the only passengers on board. Knowing the Englishman’s liking for his own type of breakfast, the Captain had a big dish of about three dozen fried eggs especially cooked for us. These were prepared well in advance, so that when, after our attack on them on the first morning, we confined our attention to the various cheeses and anchovies favoured by the officers themselves, he realised that we meant what we said about liking the Norwegian dishes, and the eggs no longer made their appearance.

In Venezuela the ten-month-old stewardess, Penelope Morton, was given a permit to land on condition that she carried no firearms

or knives on her person!

On we sailed, then, through the blue waters of the Caribbean, through the calm, mysterious, weed-choked Sargasso Sea, birthplace of the eels, and on with the Gulf Stream into the broad Atlantic.

For sheer seaworthiness give me a fully laden tanker every time —she does not go over the swell, but through it, and her dead weight gives her a stability unknown in a passenger ship with her empty holds and top-heavy superstructure.

When we arrived home the powers that be decided that we should not return to Trinidad, but move on to pastures new. This decision was taken, I was told, because of the information about the proposed activities of the Stern Gang in the island.

PART THREE

LAND OF THE LAKE

Chapter 33

LUX IN TENEBRIS

This new leave of ours had the usual quota of uncertainties as to our future, but it had the advantage of being comparatively short—indeed, we did not, for once, exceed the amount of leave due to us. The letter which arrived from the Colonial Office offering me a transfer as a Superintendent of Police in Nyasaland started another feverish bout of atlas scanning and reference-book hunting.

I accepted the offer—there would have been no point in doing otherwise, for I had no preconceived notions as to where I wanted to go next—but when I did so I had but a scant knowledge of the country and its history. I knew, of course, that it was David Livingstone country and that it took its name from the long, narrow stretch of water, Lake Nyasa, which was the outstanding physical feature of the area, but beyond that there was little that we were able to discover about our new home before we actually arrived.

We sailed on the *Durban Castle* from Southampton; as it happened, this was her first trip after the voyage during which a good-time girl named Gay Gibson had been murdered and pushed through the porthole of her cabin into the sea by a deck steward named Camb—an incident which gave me a professional interest in the ship.

The journey itself was uneventful as far as most of the passengers were concerned—not for us, however, for Penny took the opportunity to develop measles when the journey was half through. She was promptly moved to the isolation hospital, and we eventually sailed into Table Bay with the quarantine flag flying solely for our small daughter, for fortunately no other cases had

developed in the meantime.

We had called at Capetown on our way round to Durban and Palestine during the war, and on that occasion we had been thrilled by the magnificence of the view. It was breathtaking in its beauty. The sea had been as calm as a millpond, and we were escorted in by shoals of seals and dolphins gambolling at our bows. The sky was cloudless, and Table Mountain stood out brilliantly, with the details of every feature of it so clearly denned that one felt almost as though one could stretch up and touch it.

But that had been a troopship, and we were on our way to Durban, so no shore leave was granted. Now that we were actually to disembark at Capetown the vista was very different. The clouds were right down over Table Mountain, and there was a cold, blustering gale blowing—the notorious SouthEaster—which whipped the breakers into a fury of froth and foam.

The port doctor came aboard to see Penny and, having satisfied himself that it was only measles from which she was suffering, permitted the disembarkation of passengers to start. The ship's doctor had told us that Penny could be put in an isolation hospital on shore, but the port medical officer had other ideas. He said we could take her ashore with us and, indeed, refused to take any further interest in her welfare.

We were, therefore, faced with smuggling the child, spots and all, into a hotel—a feat we accomplished with the greatest reluctance, for we knew that no hotel would willingly accommodate us in these circumstances.

We were scheduled to go on by train to Nyasaland the day after we landed, but in the circumstances we decided to stay in Capetown for a few days at least in order to give Penny a chance to recuperate a little.

We found a room in a narrow, triangular hotel near the docks—

a room on the third floor at the pointed end of the building with about fourteen large double windows in it, each of which rattled and shook in the gale which was still blowing.

I spent half the first night attempting to wedge them into silence with combs, hair-slides, toothbrushes and wads of paper, with only indifferent success. The hours of daylight we spent in shifts trying to keep the invalid amused, while the one off duty explored nearby Adderley Street and the big stores full of all the things which were still rationed or non-existent in England.

A week later, with Penny more or less presentable, we set out on the long train journey up through southern Africa to our destination. This journey, which takes six days and nights, is an adventure not to be undertaken lightly in any circumstances, still less with a young, convalescent child.

We had a small compartment, officially known as a coupe*, to ourselves. This consisted of one long seat which at nighttime converted into two bunks, one above the other. As we were three, this presented rather a problem, and we had to take it in turns to share our very narrow berths with the restless Penny.

Up through the Karoo, the arid, treeless, dusty desert, on through Kimberley and into Southern Rhodesia the train chugged its interminable way; on through Bulawayo and then down into Portuguese East Africa and the tropical heat of the port of Beira. Here we changed into the train for Nyasaland and, leaving Beira at five o'clock in the evening, went on through the night towards our goal. Early the next morning we crossed the great Zambezi River by the longest bridge in the world—two miles of it—and thus to the Nyasaland frontier at Port Herald.

From every South African to whom we had spoken on the boat, in Capetown, and on the journey up we had had the same reaction when they had learned we were bound for Nyasaland. A gleam of interest would appear in their eyes and they would say,

“Nyasaland? Aren’t you lucky! That’s where our best boys come from!” They seemed to regard that country as a sort of Valhalla, full of impeccably-behaved people who, if one were lucky enough to secure some as servants, would solve in a flash all their domestic problems and enable them to live like minor royalty.

I was, therefore, interested to see these paragons for myself on their home ground. We had to pass the Nyasaland Customs and Immigration examination at Port Herald, and while we were waiting I took a good look at the Africans who were standing about on the station, many of them offering indifferent fruit for sale to the passengers. At first glance they did not appear any different from the many Africans we had seen on our journey up, though they all appeared to be remarkably cheerful.

Without exception they were dressed in rags—the women in dirty black cloth wrapped round their bodies and tucked in under one arm, and the men in torn khaki shorts and shirts or singlets; some of them, indeed, must have exercised all the skill of an accomplished fan-dancer to avoid exposing their nakedness, so incredibly raggecl.were the remnants of the garments they wore on their lower regions.

Here I saw my first Nyasaland policeman—a sergeant, judging by the stripes on his arm—and I was shocked to see that he also conformed to the general standard of dress. He was standing by a tumbledown wooden shack with a roof made of flattened petrol tins, which bore the legend “Cantin” on a piece of board nailed on its wall.

The sergeant was drinking what was presumably tea from a tin mug, his little finger delicately crooked as he sipped the steaming liquid. On his head he had a sort of helmet, rather like the old-fashioned English postman’s hat, except that it was covered with khaki drill.

His bush shirt was ripped right across the back, his brown

leather belt was cracked and worn and had not seen polish for months, and both legs of his khaki shorts were torn at the hems and hanging down, his black knees appearing through the apertures thus made.

On his feet he wore brown boots fastened with a scrap of bootlace, and from beneath the battered toecaps his pink toenails peeped out as though to take full advantage of the cool morning air. Around his calves were wound the remains of a pair of khaki puttees, stained and frayed almost beyond recognition.

And yet his bush shirt and his shorts, torn as they were, had obviously been washed and starched in the not too distant past.

I watched him with interest: he had not been on the train, so presumably he was stationed in this area and might conceivably be on duty at the moment, but he gave no indication that he had any function to perform, or that what was going on around him was any concern of his.

I thought of my smart Trinidad policemen, in their white tunics and helmets with silver spikes, and began to wonder what sort of force I had come to.

We were all pleased when the time came to get back on board to continue our journey, for Port Herald was the happy hunting ground of a particularly large and vicious type of mosquito which, unlike most species, appeared to keep on the job all day as well as night. We were told, by old hands on the train, that they were not malarial, but, while this was some consolation, it did not lessen the irritation caused by the numerous bites we received.

Soon we reached Chiromo, where we crossed the Shire (pronounced She-ray), the river which rises at the southern end of Lake Nyasa and flows down through the country to join the Zambezi south of Port Herald.

From Chiromo we started the long and arduous climb up

through the hills to Limbe, in the Shire Highlands, where we were to leave the train.

The rains had just broken, for this was the beginning of the wet season and the clouds were right down over the hills. In spite of the fact that we had two engines at the head of the train, in several places we failed to make the grade and had to run back, get up more steam and then have another go at the steep inclines, with much huffing and puffing and slipping of wheels.

I had met my new Commissioner and his wife in Capetown, where they were on holiday, and he had told me then that I was to take over command of the police in the Southern Province, with my headquarters in Blantyre.

We arrived in Limbe after dark and over two hours late, and were driven by the officer who had met us along the five miles of tarmac road—in those days the only stretch of surfaced road in the whole country—to Blantyre, where we were duly lodged in the one and only hotel.

And now a word about the country itself. Nyasaland is situated at the southern end of the great Rift Valley, that trough of great antiquity which stretches from the Sea of Galilee in Palestine southwards through the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea, the Red Sea and then down through the East African lakes and Lake Nyasa, from which the country takes its name. The Lake itself, 380 miles from north to south, is a narrow stretch of treacherous water, over 2,300 feet in depth in parts, from the southern end of which the Shire River flows along its tortuous course to join the Zambezi beyond Port Herald.

It is a land of marked climatic contrasts, hot and humid in the river valley, warm but somewhat less humid on the lake shore 1,550 feet above sea-level, and temperate and cool and very pleasant to live in when one climbs the escarpment on either side of the lake and the river to the plateaux of the Shire Highlands 3,000

or 4,000 feet above the sea.

The administrative capital, Zomba, nestles in the shadow of the mountain of the same name and was chosen, one feels, more for the beauty of its setting than for its strategic situation. Nyasalanders claim that it is the most beautiful capital in the Commonwealth, but while this description may apply to its surroundings it certainly cannot include its buildings. It must certainly be one of the few capitals where lions can still roam the streets after dark, as they have been known to do in recent years, and where any night a leopard may leap on to one's khonde to investigate the contents of the meat-safe.

The country's coat of arms is a leopard statant, superimposed on a rising sun, and its motto is *"Lux in Tenebris"*, from which Nyasaland has come to be known vicariously as "The Land of the Leopard" and "Darkest Africa in Fairest Mood".

The commercial capital is Blantyre, some forty miles to the south, with nearby Limbe, headquarters of the railway and of the tobacco industry, running it very close. In the not too distant future these two towns must inevitably amalgamate to form one large municipality, for already much of the intervening land has been built upon.

The outstanding physical feature of the country, apart from the lake itself, perhaps, is Mount Mlanje, a huge, forbidding mass of rock which rises sheer from the land below, a plateau upon a plateau. The ever-changing shades and shadows upon its steep, cleft sides, with the neat green rows of tea bushes stretching out for miles from its foot, cannot fail to cause the newcomer to stand and stare as he views its splendour for the first time.

The country's annual exports, worth nearly £6,000,000 per annum, come mostly from tobacco and tea, with maize, cotton, groundnuts, beans and tung oil also contributing their share. Sometimes, however, if the rains fall, maize has to be imported in

large quantities to be distributed to the starving population, whose staple diet it is.

Apart from about 5,000 Europeans and slightly more Asiatics, the whole of the 2,500,000 population are Africans. The Asiatics—mostly Indians and Pakistanis—are mainly engaged in trade with the Africans, a function which they perform, I always feel, with little appreciation of the vast trade potential which surely exists with the indigenous population.

The European stores in the towns do some desultory business with Africans, but, as many of them exercise a colour bar and require their native customers to queue up for their needs at an outside window instead of entering the store, there is little incentive for them to spend the proceeds of the sale of their tobacco crops.

The African Lakes Corporation, a trade organisation established by farsighted pioneers of the Church of Scotland Mission, but now run entirely as a commercial concern, does have stores scattered sparsely over the countryside, but there is nothing in the way of an energetic sales campaign to encourage the Africans to purchase reasonable-quality consumer goods.

Nyasaland is still virtually an undeveloped country; there is coal at the northern end of the lake, and bauxite on Mlanje Mountain, but the extent of both of them has yet to be ascertained. In the main it is an agricultural land, but perhaps its greatest wealth lies in its manpower potential. Apart from a handful of hospital nurses, schoolteachers and nannies, the African women are unemployed and, at present, unemployable. All domestic servants—in fact, all hired labour—are males, so that if and when the women can be trained and are permitted by their families to accept paid employment far more of the menfolk will be released to seek lucrative work in the Rhodesias and South Africa, where they are in big demand.

The African standard of living, partly because of the fact that

more than half the community of working age is unemployable, is low; in consequence, the work of the police is complicated by the fact that a term of imprisonment holds no terrors or disgrace to the African, who knows that he will get more and better food in jail than he would in his own home. For this reason escapes from lawful custody are not as frequent as they might well be; not so many years ago it was a common sight to see a party of convicts returning to the prison after a day's work on the roads with one of them bringing in the rifle of their warder, who had gone straight home for his dinner.

The older residents have a fund of amusing yarns of the early days to tell—like the story of the one-armed man who was appointed by the Government to keep down the numbers of elephants which were wrecking the village gardens. A more serious handicap for a big-game hunter it would be hard to imagine, but it appears that by training an African to stand perfectly still while he rested the rifle across his shoulder he was able to carry out his duties efficiently. There must certainly have been a high degree of mutual confidence between them, but I have often wondered whether the African stood facing the target or the hunter. I do not know which position I would wish to adopt if I had to act as a gun-rest in similar circumstances. It seems to me rather like having to decide whether to be blindfolded or not when you face a firing squad, only more so.

Another tale which particularly appealed to me concerned the contract for carrying the mail between Zomba and Fort Jamieson in Northern Rhodesia. For many years this task was put out to tender, and the contract was always awarded to the only bidder, one of the real old stagers who drove his own ramshackle apology for a car. He used to call on his cronies on various estates on his way and nobody knew within a few days when the mail would be likely to arrive.

Then a newcomer to the country brazenly put in a much lower

bid and was awarded the contract. He bought a new car and took on an African to drive it. The first journey to Fort Jamieson broke all records—the mail was delivered on schedule for the first time in history. It was too good to be true, however; on his way back, anxious to keep to the strict timetable set by his *bwana*, he bumped a baby elephant. The irate mother trampled the new car to matchwood and killed the driver. The contract promptly went back to the original holder, who continued to combine pleasure with business for a good many more years, much to the detriment of punctuality.

Chapter 34

PRIMITIVE POLICEWORK

The morning after our arrival—it was a Sunday—I had a walk round Blantyre and found it to be the nearest thing to a frontier town one could hope to find outside a Wild West film.

There were no hitching rails for horses, but the comparatively wide roads were unsurfaced, muddy and full of potholes, while open drains ran along each side of them. The stores were mainly roofed with corrugated iron, much of it rusty, while each had the covered veranda of the typical cowboy town.

That evening I walked down to the Police Station—a ramshackle, rabbit warren of a place, sorely in need of a coat of paint and a good clean-out. In what was known as the Charge Office (an unfortunate name by any standards, for police have lots of other functions beside charging people), I found a bored policeman lounging idly behind the high counter, on which was a register bearing the title “Occurrence Book”. In this, in a mixture of illiterate English and Chinyanja, the local *lingua franca*, were recorded entries concerning the movement of patrols, of cases reported and of other items of police interest.

As I scanned this book, trying to decipher the contents, an excited African came in and poured out a stream of words to the policeman. I had no idea what he was saying, but from his attitude and that of the policeman it seemed that he wanted something to which the policeman would not agree. After a somewhat heated discussion the latter obviously told him to leave, but before he could do so I intervened to enquire what it was all about.

The policeman (to whom I had previously introduced myself) said: “He has come to report a case, Bwana”

“What sort of a case?”

“He says it is murder, *Bwana*.”

“What have you told him?”

“As it is Sunday and there is no officer in the station I have told him to come back tomorrow morning and make his report to *Bwana* —.”

Unable to believe my own ears, I went over it all again, convinced that there must be a mistake somewhere; but no, I’d got it right the first time. Taking a grip on my reeling senses, I asked him: “Is there a Duty Officer?”

“Yes, *Bwana*.”

“Can you get him on the ’phone?”

He thought a moment, obviously considering the repercussions of such a step. Eventually, when I said I would speak to him, he said he would try to get him, though he doubted whether he would be at home at that time on a Sunday evening.

As it happened, he was at home, and I did speak to him. I told him who I was (he had obviously heard of my arrival), told him briefly about the report and asked him to get the details from the Station Orderly. Then ensued a long conversation in Chinyanja, after which I took over the ’phone again and he confirmed to me that the report was one of murder.

"What are you going to do about it?" I asked.

"I have told the orderly to take all details and that I will arrange for a policeman to go out to the scene in the morning, sir."

"Why not tonight—now?"

He explained to me that it was dark, that it was raining and that the village where it had happened was a long way away. The body was in a hut, so the lions would not get it before the morning.

As I discovered later, he was a young Inspector with only a few months in the force and no training, but he was full of enthusiasm for his new job and most anxious to learn. That night I gave him his first lesson on the 'phone, before I had even met him, by pointing out gently but firmly that the only correct time to investigate any crime was the earliest possible moment after it had been committed.

He went out the same night, out into the rain and the darkness with two or three African policemen, and came back early the next morning bringing the murderer with him. (I rather felt that the murderer had delayed his escape in the belief that the police would not appear until the next day!)

The next morning I went down to the Police Station betimes to take over my new duties. I found I had under my command one Assistant Superintendent (who was nominally in charge of the Blantyre District, but who had for some time been doing my job pending my arrival) and two or three young European Assistant Inspectors. Scattered through the other districts in my division I had a couple more Assistant Superintendents and the same number of Assistant Inspectors. There were also some 250 African policemen with which to police a large area of land with a population of over 1,000,000. (I found later, on comparing statistics quoted in a Colonial Office publication, that Xyasaland had far fewer policemen per head of population than any other Colonial territory.)

The Force, as a whole, was illiterate, though a start had been made a year previously to enlist a small number of mission-trained men of Standard V and VI into the force with the rank of Station Sergeant, and it had been one of these I had observed at Port

Herald. The signs of his education were the boots and puttees and the postman-like helmet (known as the shako), the so-called "Regular" members of the force wearing a pillbox hat of khaki drill and going barefoot.

These Station Sergeants were, by and large, a success. They were breaking new ground and had to overcome a good deal of prejudice among both the European members of the community with whom they came in contact, and also their fellow Africans.

In the first place, some of the diehard old-timers among the Europeans resented strongly any African wearing any kind of footwear, which they considered to be aping the white man and a personal affront. In fact, one very charming lady whom we had met on the ship on the way out, and who had lived practically all her life in Nyasaland, had said to my wife:

"Let me give you a word of advice, my dear. Never allow an African to wear shoes in your house."

There is the story, too, of a District Commissioner of the old school (long since passed into retirement) who, when an African clerk walked into his Courtroom with shoes on during the hearing of a case, leapt over the bench and punched him straight on the jaw, knocking him out cold. Some of the old settlers also disliked the veneer of mission education and the teaching of English, believing it to be beneath their dignity to address an African in other than his own tongue.

The African public, too, were suspicious of these new creations. They were used to the old-type askari padding down the bush tracks in their bare feet, and they did not know what to make of this new breed who not only wore boots (of a sort), but also wrote down what you said in a little book.

But there was only a mere handful of them, and in most of the districts statements in criminal cases were still being recorded by

civilian clerks who had neither knowledge of, nor interest in, the laws of evidence and criminal procedure.

In many of the administrative districts, where there was no European police officer stationed, the District Commissioner was also legally the “Officer in Charge of Police”, which function he had to fit in as best he might among his other duties as administrator, magistrate, gaoler, public works engineer, forest officer, agricultural officer and general dog’s-body.

I soon realised, therefore, that in these circumstances police work as I had known it in Palestine and Trinidad was going to be difficult, if not impossible. Fortunately, there was not a great deal of major crime—apart from murders. Murders were common, and in most circumstances they consisted of a man killing his unfaithful wife, or a friend as the result of a sudden quarrel at a beer drink.

The African’s idea of drinking, I found, was to drink the home-brewed beer until either he was out for the count or his money gave out. As the beer was cheap (no Excise duty was paid on it), it was generally the former.

Because of this general inability to have a drink without getting drunk, Africans were only permitted to purchase or consume imported spirits if they held a permit to do so issued by their District Commissioner, and these permits were issued only to people of standing in the community who were of known sobriety. The distillation from maize of a potent spirit, known locally as *kachaso*, is strictly prohibited and fines or imprisonment are imposed upon any person found in possession of it, or of any still or equipment for making it.

This discrimination between the races was, in fact, a form of colour bar, but in my view a very necessary one which was in the best interests of the Africans themselves.

I wish I could say the same about the curfew which existed—

and, I believe, still exists—in the major towns. This is a regulation made under the appropriate Townships Ordinance, which makes it an offence for any African to be out on the streets after 9 p.m. unless he is in possession of a current pass from his employer authorising his journey.

From the police point of view, of course, it was a very useful regulation to have, for it meant that any African found out after curfew without a pass was immediately suspect, but it was, surely, not a very creditable way of offsetting the inadequate number of police in the country and the paucity of the street lighting in the towns.

There was a good deal of petty theft among the Africans, and from time to time there would be outbreaks of burglary of European houses which continued until the man responsible was caught, as he invariably was.

Some of these burglars were both daring and surefooted, and it was not unusual for a householder to wake up in the morning and find that his watch and money had been taken from his bedside table or even, on occasion, from under his pillow. There was a theory among the Africans that these criminals had a special powder, which they blew into the room through the keyhole, and which prevented the occupants awakening while they were on their job. This theory was popular because it was a form of witchcraft, and most Africans—in Nyasaland anyway—however long they may have been at a mission school, and however deep the veneer of Christianity, still have inherent belief in the efficacy of witchcraft which they are unwilling or unable to discard.

The police, too, are not immune from these superstitions; I know of one occasion on which, following an unsuccessful attempt to enter it the previous night, an ambush of two constables was placed on a European house in Blantyre.

The next morning the irate householder reported that his house

had been ransacked under the very noses of the men in ambush. They were questioned closely by their officer and, after repeated denials that anything unusual had happened, eventually admitted that a figure had gone past them and into the compound of the house. They had done nothing to stop him or to catch him on the way out because he was obviously a witch (witches can be of either sex in Nyasaland). They were sure of this, they said, because he had been riding on a hyena and his head was on back to front.

I was always intrigued to find that the victims of these burglaries were invariably the very lightest of sleepers, and in fact I never came across one who was prepared to admit that he slept like a log. Be that as it may, the fact remains that these burglaries were sometimes carried out in houses in which otherwise efficient watchdogs were kept, and they failed to give any warning of the presence of the intruder. Whether the thieves had the ability to make friends with the dogs, or the dogs themselves fell short of their masters' opinion of them, or, indeed, whether the witch-doctor's powder really did exist and worked equally well on dogs, I should not like to say.

During my first few days in Blantyre I realised that the Station Sergeant I had seen at Port Herald was by no means unique in the condition of his clothing—indeed, the uniform of practically all the police was in an advanced state of disrepair.

This was, I found, due to a combination of circumstances. In the first place, while Nyasaland claimed for itself (in competition with one or two other small colonies) the title of "Cinderella of the Empire", there was no doubt at the time of my arrival that the Police Force was the Cinderella among all the departments of the Nyasaland Government.

At Headquarters in Zomba the duties of both Staff Officer and Pay and Quartermaster were performed by low-salaried civilian clerks instead of trained and experienced police officers, and it is with no sense of criticism of the two men concerned that I say that

they had neither the background nor theoutlook—nor indeed the status—necessary to enable them to do their job effectively.

The Quartermaster, therefore, through lack of funds, inadequate staff and an inferior system of purchasing and stockkeeping (which he had inherited), was unable to meet the indents for new clothing when they were sent in from the various formations. In consequence, when he did get fresh supplies of uniform it was always insufficient to meet the indents on hand and very often the items were despatched to the district whose demands were either the last received or the most strident, without any regard to where the need was greatest.

The tunics and shorts, when they did come, were appallingly badly made, and when I examined closely the first batch to arrive in Blantyre after I took up my duties I found that, among other faults, buttonholes would be spaced at irregular intervals and the breast pockets might well be over 1 inch higher on one side than the other. Recruits were issued with leather belts which should have been scrapped long ago, and the issue of a tin of boot polish was something to talk about for a long time.

Another important factor in this matter was the attitude of the African police themselves. All their lives, from the time they were born until they joined the Force, they had lived in rags, and it simply never occurred to them to do anything about it. There was no disgrace or shame attached to wearing a ragged shirt and shorts in your village or in the mission school, and it did not automatically become shameful to do so on the day you became a policeman. They had never subscribed to the theory that a stitch in time saves nine and, as far as they were concerned, their clothes could literally fall to pieces and they would still not think of having them repaired in any way. In fact, there was nobody to do any repairing, anyway —the womenfolk never touched a needle and cotton all their lives, and the men would never dream of doing it for themselves. And, of course, there would be no point in paying the village tailor to do it

for them.

The same with boots. Those of them who had been lucky enough to acquire a pair of second-hand shoes before joining the Force just wore them till they fell to pieces, and boot polish was virtually a waste of time and money. When they joined the police and were given boots they would always wear them until they were beyond repair rather than hand them in for soling and heeling when it first became necessary.

It has long been an axiom of mine that a police force can be smart without being efficient, but that it cannot be efficient if it is not smart. The would-be thief will always judge the calibre of the man on the beat by his appearance—the smart, alert constable with polished leatherwork, shining buttons and well-starched drill will always act as a deterrent, while the slovenly, untidy man will be a positive invitation to crime.

The morale of a force is always reflected in the polish on the boots of its constables.

This need to drum into the lower ranks of the Force the importance of smartness of turn-out was a constant uphill struggle, but we did achieve the required standard eventually.

Another problem which had a direct bearing on the matter was that of living accommodation for the men. All African members of the Force were provided with quarters for themselves and their families in the police lines, an encampment consisting mainly of thatched mud huts known as rondavels.

Many of these huts were old and vermin-ridden. Attempts were made each year, within the limits of the very small amount of money available for the purpose, to patch them up sufficiently to keep the rain out, but in general they were a disgrace to the country.

The value of the uniform and equipment with which each

policeman was issued was around £30, and he was expected to maintain all of it in good order. It would, in my view, have needed some pretty effective witchcraft to enable a constable to emerge each morning looking smart and clean and well turned-out from the dirty, mouldy, dank, dark, lousy, leaking hovel in which he was expected to live cheerfully. No wonder the Force offered little attraction in those days for the bettor type of African.

Those who did join stayed for some six months in the Police Training School at Zomba, but by all accounts they spent most of their time cutting thatching grass and patching up the roofs of their mud huts. The police themselves had to be used for this purpose because the Government failed to provide enough money for it to be done by men skilled at the task, though their wages would have been something like half the pay of a policeman—a false economy, surely.

What a pity it is that in almost every colonial territory no effort is made to build up an efficient and contented police force until an emergency arises. When that happens the powers that be suddenly wake up to the fact that the police force is the most important section of the whole government system (as indeed it is, for without it no other department could continue to function). But by then it is too late, of course, and all the money which is then lavished on the police can never make up for the opportunities which were missed when things were peaceful.

It happened in Palestine, it has happened in Kenya and in Cyprus, and it will inevitably happen again in other territories in the years to come. It is, I suppose, a corollary of our often premature attempts at democratic forms of government and our antipathy towards what has come to be known as the police state, though this term can hardly be used to denote the British conception of the work of the police.

Chapter 35

PROBLEMS OF LIVING

Our own problems of accommodation did not lag far behind those of the African police. As a Government official I was entitled to be provided with quarters for which I had to pay a percentage of my salary as rent. The allocation of the existing quarters in each district was the responsibility of a committee of officials under the chairmanship of the District Commissioner. The Blantyre Committee had been notified of my impending arrival, but had done nothing in advance to make suitable quarters available for our use.

The matter came up for discussion at the next meeting after we arrived, and it was then decided that for the time being I could take my choice of a two-roomed apartment in what was originally the Governor's official residence in Blantyre, or of a small house near the Police Station and overlooking the Blantyre Sports Club. This was at present occupied by the Assistant Superintendent in charge of Blantyre, who was a bachelor.

After a depressing inspection of both places, we decided that, inadequate as it was, the small house near the Station was the lesser of the two evils. And evil it was, for we were informed that it had been condemned twenty-five years before, but had never been replaced because of the usual lack of funds.

It consisted of three interconnected rooms, a store cupboard and a so-called bathroom, and a reasonable khonde, or veranda. There was no running water in the house, though there was a standpipe in the yard.

The bath was a galvanised iron coffin which had to be filled

manually and emptied by pulling out the plug and letting the water run out on to the floor, whence it found its way out into the yard through a hole in the wall.

If Palestine was a land flowing with milk and honey and Trinidad was the "Land of the Humming Bird", then Nyasaland was surely "Land of the *Chimbuzi*", which was the local name for the toilet. Ours consisted of a bucket and a box of sawdust in an enclosed part of the *khonde*. Some time in the very small hours of each morning two gentlemen known as the night-soil staff would arrive, remove the bucket through a trap-door at the back, empty it and replace it in position. Although this procedure was usually accompanied by sufficient clanging to ensure that the occupants were made aware of what was going on, there was always the fear, if one had to get up during the night, that the bucket would be snatched away when one was actually using it, a thing which has been known to happen on more than one occasion, to my personal knowledge.

The masterpiece of the whole establishment, however, was the kitchen. This, fortunately, was detached from the house and consisted of a small brick structure a few yards from the back door. It can best be described as a cross between Dante's Inferno and the village smithy. It had a small, wood-burning stove on one side, made (for cheapness) by the local Public Works Department of sheet metal. The fire-box was so tiny that it was not possible to close its door when the fire was alight, with the result that long billets of wood were pushed into the fire bit by bit as the end burned. In consequence, the upper half of the room was always filled with acrid fumes and blinding smoke, so that a venture into the interior was a more hazardous experience than any undertaken by Laurens van der Post during his fleeting visit to the country and about which he wrote so eloquently.

My wife and I, on the rare occasions on which we made such an expedition, always emerged coughing and spluttering and with eyes

watering, but the servants (of whom more anon) seemed to thrive on it.

So did the cockroaches, of which there were thousands of every shape and size; they seemed to be impervious both to the smoke and also to the various brands of insecticide on which we spent a small fortune. Unfortunately, at that time I had not discovered their predilection for borax.

I asked the P.W.D. representative to call and, in my absence, my wife tried without success to persuade him to install a decent bath, wash basin and a Dover stove. His comment was that we should consider ourselves lucky to have a house of any kind for our use—in the old days many people had to live in tents and were glad to do so. My wife pointed out to him, in all seriousness, that there was nothing about tents in our contract.

The furniture provided by the benevolent Government was on a par with the house itself. There were two huge armchairs, made of heavy frames of unpolished mahogany with raffia seats and backs, which must have been designed to fit the anatomy of a baboon, and a long settee affair in similar materials which was described on the inventory as a lounge, though that was about the last thing we could hope to do on it.

In the bedroom were two single beds, also of great slabs of mahogany, but it was the springing which we found particularly disconcerting. This consisted of 1-inch strips of rawhide (to which the hair was still attached) stretched over the frame so as to form a pattern of 9-inch squares. To go on top of this was a thin mattress filled with lumpy coconut fibre.

After our first few nights on these creations, during which the draughtboard effect of the “springs” on our bodies combined with the smell like a Bermondsey tannery which the heat of our bodies generated in the half-dried rawhide to make sleep well-nigh impossible, I took pity on my wife and bought her an inner-spring

mattress. For my part, used as I was to sleeping rough, I was able to get reasonable sleep by putting the two coconut mattresses together, and we soon got accustomed to the smell.

Shades of Trinidad! There we had had a three-bedroomed house, each room with a complete suite of good modern furniture.

Lest my story should have a depressing effect on any budding aspirants for the Nyasaland Civil Service who may chance to read it, let me say now that this was in 1947, and that improvements have since been made to many of the Government quarters and also to their furnishings. Water-borne sanitation is now the rule rather than the exception, proper baths and (where electricity is available) electric stoves arc provided.

During our tour in Blantyre we progressed first to a slightly better house next door and then to a much better one on the top of a hill overlooking the police lines, in which we were very happy.

On first acquaintance our African servants did not come up to expectations, and we were forced to conclude that either all the best ones had emigrated to Rhodesia and South Africa or the standard in those countries was not all we had been led to believe.

We engaged a succession of elderly cooks, all of whom produced impeccable references and who, on those occasions when they were sober and on the job, were able to turn out an excellent meal with the primitive facilities available for the purpose. True, we found the odd cockroach in the omelet but, in general, if one were prepared to overlook their peccadilloes, one could live reasonably well and cheaply.

It was a well-established principle in Nyasaland in those days that the cook must not be expected to undertake menial duties which were not in keeping with his dignity, such as preparing the vegetables, washing up the pots and pans and sweeping out the kitchen. For these tasks a kitchen boy had to be provided.

The cook's sole functions, in fact, were to go to the market each morning to purchase vegetables, meat and any other local produce required by the *dona* (the female equivalent to *bwana*) and to do the actual cooking. There his functions ended. The morning excursion to the market was a prolonged business, from which he would return only in time to put the lunch on, and it was an accepted fact that the price paid by the dona to the cook bore no relation to the price actually paid by him in the market, the difference being considered by the cook (if not by the *dona*) as his legitimate "perks".

As the usual stipend for a cook at the time was around 25*s*. per month—yes, per month—plus gd. or is. a week posho, or food money, their attitude was perhaps understandable.

The kitchen boy would get about 10*s*. per month and the house servants, of whom there were generally two, from 15*s*. to £1 a month, with the same *posho* as the cook. The garden boy would rate at 10*s*. to 15*s*. per month, according to age and experience.

These wages were, of course, ridiculously low and have increased substantially since, but many of the old-timers in the country considered them exorbitant and would reminisce nostalgically of the good old days when one had a boy whose sole job was to wind up the gramophone and another charged only with the task of taking the dog for a walk, for which they each received 2*s*. 6*d*. a month.

After a series of minor skirmishes with a succession of elderly cooks in various stages of inebriation or hangover, my wife decided to make a fresh start. She sent for our garden boy, a clean-looking, pleasant-faced Yao lad named Ali, and, through the medium of the head boy, Neza, as interpreter, told him that he was promoted forthwith to the rank of cook. His face was blank when he came in, expecting to get the sack for some trivial misdeed, and it remained blank when he heard what Fate had in store for him.

Neza repeated the information several times without securing the slightest change in his vacant expression, so, holding him firmly by the arm, he led him to the table on the back *khonde*, where my wife was preparing to give him his first lesson.

Poor Ali! He had never cooked anything in his life, not even his own *nsima*, or maize porridge. He had never even been in a European kitchen or seen a European dish prepared for serving. From that point of view it was perhaps just as well, for he came to my wife virgin in his innocence and with no preconceived ideas as to how it should be done. Indeed, he had no ideas as to how anything should be done, as she quickly discovered; he had never had to use the brain in his woolly noddle, and it had begun to atrophy in consequence; he could not even tell the time, and the idea of having to think and do things for himself was so novel that he could not grasp the implications of what lay ahead.

My wife is a woman of tremendous determination when she sets herself to a task, and Ali was like clay in her hands. With infinite patience she took him through the preparation of simple dishes, repeating them time after time until he could follow the various steps automatically. He could not read or write, of course, nor could he speak English, but between them they devised a language which was a mixture of bastard English, Chinyanja and Yao which was incomprehensible to anyone but the two of them. Ali was our cook throughout the rest of our stay in Nyasaland, and very good he became at the dishes my wife taught him.

In the market one could buy mutton (which was popularly supposed to be goat, and generally tasted like it) or beef. The beef came in two kinds—beef with bones at 6*d.* a pound, and beef without bones at 8*d.* Although, presumably, this meat came from animals with an anatomy not entirely dissimilar to those bred in England, it was rarely possible to identify the cook's purchase with any of the standard joints referred to in the cookery books—it was just a shapeless hunk of flesh with or without bones, depending on

the price paid.

Fruit was fairly plentiful, the most popular being pawpaw, a sort of melon which grows on a tree rather like a palm and which is usually the first course at breakfast.

Mangoes were plentiful in season, though they did not compare in texture or flavour to the Julie mango of Trinidad. Mangoes are a fruit for which I never acquired a taste, for they all smelt like turpentine and tasted like mangel-wurzels, though even to my uneducated palate the Julie mangoes were of a superior brand of turps to any I tried in Nyasaland.

Fresh green peas, runner beans, cabbages, cauliflower and turnips could be obtained practically all the year round at reasonable prices, while delicious cultivated strawberries, though in limited quantities, could be found during about eight months of the year. Bananas, pineapples and citrus fruit, while not of first quality, also had a long season. Eggs could be obtained at the door from Africans, who would willingly barter them for empty bottles or old newspapers at the rate of one egg for one *Sunday Express*, which they used with their home-grown tobacco to make cigarettes. This may seem a poor bargain, but when one took into consideration the size of the eggs and their uncertain age, one sometimes felt that the African got the better of the deal.

Chapter 36

LANGUAGE AND LIZARDS

When I accepted the appointment in Nyasaland I realised that it would mean learning another language, for I felt strongly that no man can be an efficient policeman if he cannot speak with the inhabitants of the country in their own tongue.

This was a prospect to which I did not look forward with any degree of pleasure, for to me the learning of new languages has always been a matter of sheer hard plodding.

Some people have a definite linguistic flair and can add new tongues to their repertoire with comparatively little effort, but while I envy them this faculty I console myself with the thought that those I have met have been very little good at anything else—and particularly police work.

The *lingua franca* in Nyasaland (although there is an assortment of tribal dialects) is of Bantu origin and is named Chinyanja, or Nyanja, the Language of the Lake. Until the advent of the missionaries it was purely a spoken tongue, with an easygoing, flexible grammar which could be varied at will without anybody thinking any the worse of it. The pundits of the Church, however, of whom the greatest was the Rev. A. Heatherwick, had devised for it a grammar which was so complex and obscure as to be practically incomprehensible to anybody who, like myself, had not had a thorough grounding in the classics.

Indeed, I never met a Chinyanja-speaking African, however well educated, who could follow the theories expounded by the worthy Heatherwick in his standard work on the subject.

This being so, I had perforce to look elsewhere for my tuition, and was lucky enough to obtain the services of a teacher at the Church of Scotland Mission in Blantyre, named Lester Nkomba. Lester came to my house every afternoon for nearly six months, and from him I got a grounding in Chinyanja. His English was reasonably good and, with a more recent textbook which was much less complex than Heatherwick's, I explored the language to the best of my limited ability.

All officers below the rank of Superintendent were required to pass the half-yearly examination set by the Government Languages Board before they could be confirmed in their rank. I was exempt from this qualification, of course, but it seemed to me that from all points of view it would be an excellent thing if I took it. Apart from anything else, I felt it would be a good example to some of my officers who did not appear to share my own opinion as to the importance of being able to speak to the people.

To this end, therefore, I set to work to find out all I could about the examination and exactly what the examiners expected of the candidates. The first thing I learned was that they were very Heatherwick-minded, and that a knowledge of his theories on the grammar was more important than the ability to speak fluently and comprehensibly to the Africans and to understand correctly what they replied.

This may sound strange, but subsequent events proved, to my satisfaction anyway, the accuracy of this statement. I learned, parrot-fashion, thousands of words, muttering them and translating them to myself all day and half the night. My wife used to take my notebook each evening and fire English or Chinyanja words at me until I knew them all intimately. In the same way I learned by heart a large number of definitions from Heatherwick, though, having learned them, I had but little idea as to what they meant.

Less than six months after my arrival the next examination was due and as the date drew near, full of trepidation as to the outcome,

I submitted my name for it.

Also taking the same examination was a young Inspector named John de Meza, whose father, until his death some months previously, had been the country's Director of Veterinary Services. John had been born in Nyasaland and had spent all his life there except for the period he was in boarding school in England.

As far as I was concerned, he was a brilliant Chinyanja speaker, for I used him constantly as my interpreter right up to the time of the exam., and I had no doubt as to his ability to understand and to make himself understood. In fact, the idea of competing with him on an equal footing almost made me withdraw my name.

On the appointed day we both appeared before the erudite members of the Languages Board and a few weeks later the results were announced.

I had passed and he had failed.

Doubtless the examiners were motivated partly by my effrontery (I was, I was told, the first candidate to pass the examination within six months from scratch) and partly by my ability to recite Heatherwick's catch-phrases. The fact remained, however, that the Superintendent, who had passed the language examination, had to continue to use the Assistant Inspector, who had failed, as an interpreter for some time to come, for when an African addressed me it still sounded like a meaningless stream of gibberish in which, on rare occasions, I would recognise an odd word.

Eventually my ear became attuned to the language, and I was able to sort out the various words and phrases into some semblance of meaning. All the definitions I had learned, and much of the vocabulary, were forgotten within a matter of weeks of the examination but, though some of the words were resuscitated and put into use as my fluency increased, I never found it necessary or desirable to exhume the definitions.

It was a great weight off my conscience when John de Meza passed the next examination.

The more Chinyanja I learned the more I liked it, for it had many attractive and unusual features. For instance, the Nyasalander always answers a negative question with an affirmative when we should use the negative to convey the same meaning. To the question, "Hasn't it stopped raining?" he will say, "Yes, *Bwana*" meaning, "Yes, your assumption is correct; it hasn't stopped raining." The catch-phrase of the 'twenties, "Yes, we have no bananas!" would hold no humour for him. This landed me in all sorts of misunderstandings until I got the hang of it, and even then I always had to check to make sure I had it right.

Again, one is quite likely to receive the answer "No" to a question which, to our way of thinking, called for an entirely different reply. "What time is it?" "No, *Bwana*, it is not yet noon." The letters V and '1' can be interchanged at will, so that a man who answers to the fairly common name of Bright (which he may not be) will not take objection if you address him as Blight (which you may sometimes feel to be more appropriate).

Some of the names are both picturesque and intriguing, and one wonders how they came by them. Basikolo, a corruption of "bicycle", is common, and so, for some obscure reason, is White. I knew two good musicians in the police band named White Willie and White Sambo (a contradiction in terms, surely), many Winstons, Spencers and Churchills, and one very nice young man named Dzanjalimodzi, which, being interpreted, means "One Hand". He had both intact when I knew him, so presumably he inherited it from some battle-torn ancestor.

An African clerk informed me with considerable pride one day that in my honour he had had his sixth or seventh child (he didn't seem too sure of the exact count) named Morton Brain Chamangwanah, the latter being his family name. I was duly flattered, of course, but I was not at all clear where the Brain came

in. I decided, optimistically perhaps, that it was intended as a delicate compliment to my own mental powers; alas, as I write this, what must obviously be the true explanation occurs to me. It was meant to be Brian.

* * *

One of my first jobs in Blantyre was to supervise the conversion of a dilapidated double garage into office accommodation for myself and my staff. This task had been started by my predecessor, the Assistant Commissioner, who was now living at Headquarters in Zomba during the absence on leave of the Commissioner.

A police Corporal named Elia was doing the actual building, working by rule of thumb, for there were no plans, and, all things considered, he made a very good job of it. He was a bricklayer by trade and, although he was virtually illiterate, he had taught himself the rudiments of building. He was to be very useful to the Force in the years of reorganisation to come.

Many of the European officers and inspectors in the Force had started their police careers in Palestine, and most of the remainder originated from the British South African Police in Southern Rhodesia. There were many fundamental differences in outlook and training between the two parent forces, but nevertheless they worked well together and made a good team.

They were so thin on the ground, however, that by sheer force of circumstances many cases did not get the thorough investigation they warranted. A trickle of new inspectors were appointed from England, but in view of the size of the population and the area to be covered they were but a drop in the ocean.

With one of these I burned my fingers rather badly. In January, 1949, in anticipation of the pending retirement of the Assistant Commissioner, I was promoted to that rank to replace him, but it

was decided that I should finish my tour in Blantyre—an arrangement which suited me very well.

Although I continued to perform the duties of a provincial officer, as second in command of the Force I was brought more into the picture in regard to policy and postings than I should have been as a Superintendent, and it was thus that I learned that another policeman from Palestine was to be sent to us as an Assistant Inspector. I knew this man well— he had been a Corporal over me when I went to Palestine as a recruit—and, knowing his background, it seemed to me inconceivable that he would settle down happily as a junior inspector in Nyasaland, obliged to take orders from people not much more than half his age.

I expressed my doubts as to the wisdom of this appointment to my Commissioner who, without consulting me, passed on my views to the local government, whence they were sent to the Colonial Office. A strong reply came back from London which stated in effect that appointments in the Colonial Service were the prerogative of the Secretary of State, and that I was very much out of order in presuming to comment on them.

With my head bowed in shame, I awaited the arrival of the man concerned, determined to do all I could to make him happy. He duly arrived, took a look round, refused to take up his duties and asked to be sent back to England by the next boat. It was no consolation at all to me to be in a position to say, “I told you so,” for I was sure that the Colonial Office would think that I had deliberately set out to justify my original prediction by putting him against the job. Nothing is further from the truth, however, for I did everything I could to get him to stay. It seemed to me that whatever happened, whether he stayed or went, I was bound to be on the losing side.

In October, 1948, our son Geoffrey was born and, as a tribute to the three Alecs—Stuart, Shand and Ternent—who had by their courage, loyalty and devotion been responsible for keeping me alive

in Palestine, we gave him Alexander as one of his names. May he always live up to the sterling qualities which his namesakes displayed.

Mindful of the incident with the snake the day before Penny was born in Trinidad, I particularly hoped that nothing would happen which might be likely to upset my wife immediately before the birth.

But it did. The night before she was due to go into hospital she was sitting at the writing desk in an alcove in our sitting room, writing notes for my domestic guidance while she was away, when a lizard dropped off the wall above her straight down the back of her neck, where it wriggled and squirmed against the middle of her back. She put her hand round and pressed it against her skin, and cried out to Penny's nanny in the next room to come to her assistance. The girl came running in, and after she realised what was the matter put her arm down my wife's back and fished out the lizard—or rather, part of it. My wife had pressed so hard she had made its tail come off, but the rest of it was still squiggling under her petticoat and needed a further expedition by the nanny to retrieve it.

Many women, I am sure, would have had the baby on the spot, but my wife, bless her, was of sterner stuff and, although she has an inherent antipathy to everything which creeps or crawls or wriggles, kept her nerves firmly under control, and no harm was done.

I was particularly delighted when one of my three Alecs— Alec Stuart—was also appointed to the Nyasaland Police. He did a grand job of work for the short time he was there, but his health cracked up, and he was eventually invalided out of the service. I always felt that his condition was to no small extent due to the life we led in Tel Aviv.

Alec Ternent had got himself a straight transfer to the Uganda

Police, where he is now a Superintendent. Alec Shand, however, had not been so lucky. Going on leave from Palestine after nine and a half years' service, he had been examined by a specialist because of the nervous indigestion from which he —like myself—had suffered. Mine had disappeared the day I left Palestine, and I had kept quiet about it. Alec Shand, however, had allowed himself, as a matter of routine, to have this examination, and had not demurred when the specialist had suggested to him that it was time he had a transfer to another force where the job was less exciting. Within a week or two he was informed that he had been discharged on medical grounds—this, after he had the King's Police Medal for Gallantry to his credit and only a few months short of the minimum pensionable period of ten years! He objected, he appealed, he pleaded; he sought the help of his M.P., but all to no avail—the decision could not be reversed. And he has never had any stomach trouble since.

Doubtless the reason for his discharge on medical grounds is on record somewhere in the misty, dusty archives of the Colonial Office, and doubtless the powers-that-be there are satisfied that no injustice was done, but in the circumstances they will presumably understand if less-enlightened people who know of the case incline to believe that it was done to save the cost of the pension to which he would, in a few months, have become entitled.

When I went to Nyasaland, Alec Shand, after a period in the Control Commission in Germany, had got a temporary job in the Somaliland Police. Later I was able to get him a job in Nyasaland and, when the opportunity arose, a post as an Assistant Superintendent in the Police—a job in which his past experience and outstanding ability have been a most valuable asset to the country. He has still not got credit for the nine and a half years' valuable service which he lost, but one can only hope that some day soon justice will be done and that his time in Palestine will count towards his pension.

Headquarters Officers at Zomba

Chapter 37

ANGONI AND ATHLETICS

One thing which concerned me very much during my tour in Blantyre was the apparent absence of any team spirit and pride of service among the police. I sensed that the African members of the force looked on it as a much inferior job to that of a clerk, but somewhat better than that of a houseboy, a court messenger or a labourer on an estate.

Fortunately, we had a backbone of ex-askari of the King's African Rifles, tough Yaos, for the most part, who, while they had the best physique of any tribe in the country and a reputation for bravery, were Moslems and therefore uneducated. The reason for this is that there are no Moslem missionaries and therefore little or no educational facilities for the Moslem. The follower of Allah cannot easily be proselytised. The pagan, on the other hand (and that is a term which they themselves use to describe their lack of religious status), is quite prepared to become a Christian in order to qualify for the mission school, though he may still go off into the bush in the middle of his studies in order to undergo tribal initiation and have his ear lobes slit during the course of rites which are anything but Christian.

And, too, the mission-trained man who gets married in church often reverts to pagan, and makes no bones about it, when he reaches the stage where he decides he can afford additional wives to minister to his needs.

In spite of their background of military discipline and their tradition of service, the Yaos, because they were illiterate, had serious limitations as policemen. The missions were, however,

sending out a steadily increasing stream of lads educated in varying degrees from Standard IV to the odd few who had reached Standard X. These latter were generally likely boys who had been groomed by the Catholic Church for priesthood, but had fallen by the wayside, probably because as they matured they found the idea of lifelong celibacy less and less attractive.

The Force had little to offer to these educated youths. In the first place, unlike other workers who could please themselves where they lived and what they did outside working hours, they were required to occupy the squalid quarters in the police lines and be under discipline all the time; in the second place, their police service would start with six months in the Police Training School in Zomba where they would be largely occupied in cutting grass and thatching roofs, a prospect which appealed to them not at all. Even if they were able to stomach this inauspicious start, they had little to look forward to when posted out to the stations, for the African population had little respect for the Force and the European public had none at all for it. Constables were frequently referred to as "police boys", a term which, more than anything else in Nyasaland, made me see red. On more than one occasion I was at pains to explain with some firmness to a surprised dona that we had no boys in the police force, only men.

There was no glamour in the force and nothing about the uniform and the way it was maintained to arouse envy of its wearer in the hearts of his civilian friends.

Obviously, then, if we were to create a happy and contented force it would be necessary firstly to review the pay scales, provide decent quarters, good-quality uniform and equipment, sound training in police duties, and to foster pride of service by putting on shows which would bring the Force more into what little limelight there was in the country. After a good deal of thought, I decided that we could kill several birds with one stone if we put on a sports meeting for the police within my division. I felt that if it were a

success we should help towards enhancing the prestige of the Force, attracting a better type of recruit and raising the morale of the serving members.

Early in 1949, therefore, I called a meeting of all the officers; my wife gave a morning tea party for all their wives and we planned the details. We had no money and no sports ground, but we had unbounded enthusiasm and many willing helpers both inside and outside the force, of whom the Blantyre Town Clerk, Mr. Roberts, proved a veritable tower of strength. He whipped round the European public, and in no time had raised enough gifts in cash and in kind to provide substantial prizes for the competitors and also to help towards the overheads, while the Catholic Church solved our major problem by lending us their football ground on which to hold the meeting.

A week before the appointed date we started preparing the ground, marking out the tracks for the many events, building stands and enclosures for invited guests and the general public, and erecting tall blue gum poles with flags and bunting (most of which we designed and made ourselves) right round the perimeter.

The Acting Governor and many heads of departments in Zomba accepted our invitation to attend, but we had no idea at all how many spectators we might expect, and this made the catering, to say the least, a little difficult. We decided to provide tea for 400 guests, feeling as we did so that we were being wildly optimistic. The wives began an orgy of cakemaking which, in my house anyway, went on late into the night.

Two days before the event was due to take place a trickle of villagers of all ages, dressed in their Sunday best, started to converge upon the ground from the surrounding countryside, some of them walking up to twenty miles in order to be present at what was by all accounts to be the biggest sporting and social occasion in the history of Nyasaland. They brought food with them and camped out on nearby land, while the hawkers who flocked to the area did

a roaring trade.

Early on the morning of the sports the trickle became a stream, and long before the first event started at 1 p.m. every inch of the public enclosures was jammed tight with happy, smiling people, while every suitable tree nearby carried its quota of agile spectators, clinging precariously to the branches.

Each event was watched with interest and each winner was duly cheered. The open mile bicycle race—the only event open to the general public—brought forth nearly sixty entries, on machines of every make and vintage. Thrills and spills were many, and the excitement, in this country to which keen competition was virtually a stranger, waxed intense. The event was won by an ex-cook of ours, who nearly fainted for joy when the time came for him to receive his prize of a brand new bicycle from the hands of His Excellency the Acting Governor in person.

The police band from Zomba played selections throughout the afternoon and the band race, on the lines of a spot waltz, during which the bandsmen wandered at will within a given area playing what they liked, was another popular event. The “Get Your Man” race put the African onlookers into paroxysms of mirth. In this event the competitors were required to lie down on the starting line wearing only their shorts, the rest of their equipment lying beside them. At a given signal, a band of men in plain clothes started a riot at the other end of the field, whereupon a bugler sounded the alarm. The competitors then had to dress properly, run to the riot, arrest a rioter, handcuff him and get him back to the starting line as quickly as possible.

The Nyasaland Police sports, 1949: The Officers' Race

The European and Asian community turned up in strength, and our estimate of 400 guests for tea (in addition to the competitors) proved to be somewhat conservative. However, our wives had allowed for healthy appetites and nobody went hungry. Every event was completed on schedule—no mean feat in the circumstances—and-only two of them failed to come up to expectations. The first was throwing the spear (we had no javelin); these weapons are commonly carried in the rural districts, and one would assume that they would know how to use them, but when it came to the point not one of the dozen competitors had the least idea of how to launch it or, indeed, how to get it to travel and land point first.

The second was an extraneous item which I had included in order to provide a little variety for our guests. The Angoni tribe of the Central Province originated in South Africa, where in the early part of the last century they threw off the yoke of the notorious Zulu King Chaka and moved slowly northwards until they finally settled in Nyasaland. They brought with them much of the discipline and tradition of the famous Zulu impis, and quickly overpowered and ejected the timid tribes which had-previously occupied the area.

The Nyasaland Police sports, 1949: Angoni War Dance

The Angoni war dance is supposed to be one of the few remaining customs which they inherited from their ancestors in Zululand, and although I had not seen it myself I thought it would provide a suitable interlude for our guests between the purely athletic events. I was told, with typical African understatement, that they always took a short time to warm up, and that the provision of a little mowa, native beer, was desirable to help them in the process. This I provided in, I thought, adequate quantity, letting them know what time their performance was due and enjoining them to do all the necessary warming up well in advance.

I had allowed fifteen minutes for this item on the programme, but most of it was past before they were shepherded on to the field by the police I had sent to fetch them. There were about sixty, men and women, dressed in feathered costumes which looked (and smelled) as if they had been rescued from the garbage heap for the occasion—a very different spectacle, in fact, from the colourful display I had envisaged. In disobedience to instructions, they took up their position immediately in front of the Governor's party, the nearest only a yard from the row of guests, and promptly went into

action. The dance consisted mainly in jumping and stamping their feet on the parched grass, and in a matter of seconds had succeeded in raising a cloud of dust which, carried by a faint breeze, completely enveloped the seated guests. The dust was accompanied by a strong and unmistakable odour of African sweat and fumes from the forbidden kachaso with which they had obviously laced in generous quantities the mowa I had obtained for them.

They ignored all my signals to get further away and so I had to summon the police on duty and bring their performance to an abrupt conclusion. I learned afterwards that although they had been informed of the amount of time allocated to them they had confidently expected to be allowed to dance for six hours or so.

The afternoon concluded with the presentation of prizes by His Excellency, followed by an impressive Retreat by the band while the flag was lowered. The show was voted a great success, and everybody expressed the hope that it would become an annual event.

I wish I could record that we brought to light some brilliant athletes that day, but the fact of the matter is that the times returned were uniformly mediocre. Nevertheless, as there had never been a sports meeting in the country before, I suppose that the time for each event set up a native record for Nyasaland.

Among the prizes were two new bicycles for the champion athletes, with alarm clocks, watches, suitcases, blankets, torches and many other useful prizes for lesser events, so that the meeting did much to serve the purpose for which it had been organised.

Thereafter I observed a marked improvement in the morale of the men and an interest in their personal appearance. Relations with all sections of the community improved also, so that all in all we felt our hard work to have been well worthwhile.

Chapter 38

WITCHES AND WITCHCRAFT

Have you ever seen a witch? I have, though she was dead, poor thing, by the time we got to her. Indeed, she was dead and buried, and we had to exhume her. It was established that she was a witch, because she had submitted herself to trial by ordeal and the result had proved her guilt—proved it, at least, to the satisfaction of every African who saw the trial or heard about it afterwards. Her husband accepted it too, though she had lived with him for many years and had borne his children. It was the old story, of course—these cases do not vary much.

She had lived in a village near the banks of the lower Shire, a peaceful village as a rule, well off the beaten track and a long way from the nearest medical officer. She had gone about her lawful business, grinding her maize, cooking her lord and master's porridge and kneeling before him to offer it to him with both hands in the approved manner. She had looked after her children well, telling them stories of the old days before the white man came, of the wild animals in the bush, of the big crocodiles and hippos in the river, of the famines and floods of the past and of the crops she tended daily for their father.

Her life did not extend much beyond the confines of the village, but she enjoyed a gossip with the other village women as they washed their families' modest clothing on the big stones at the water's edge. And when two of the neighbour's children died, one after the other, with no outward indication of the cause, she was sorry, of course, and joined dutifully in the wailing, but she was not in any way perturbed. Indeed, she had lost one of her own children some years before and had come to adopt a philosophical attitude

towards what she considered to be the inevitable. After all, one had lots of children in order to allow for just such contingencies.

When the headman called a meeting of the villagers in order to discuss the matter of the unexplained deaths, she evinced no more than casual interest. She even encouraged her husband to support the suggestion that a witch-doctor should be brought in from a neighbouring village, for she felt his \isit might help to put the bereaved woman's mind at rest.

When the visitor arrived all the villagers, male and female, gathered at the bwalo to watch him at work. She knew that the purpose of his visit was to ascertain whether witchcraft had brought about the death of the children and, if so, to smell out the witch who had done it. Still she watched the proceedings with only detached interest, though she wondered idly whether by any chance any of her cronies of the washingplace could have been responsible.

When the witch-doctor, after much capering and muttering and casting of his precious bones, pointed accusingly in her direction she looked over her shoulder to see which of the villagers could be standing behind her. But when it sank into her little-used brain that it was she herself who was being accused, that the village headman was ordering her to leave the village and never return, and that her own husband—yes, even their children were looking at her with horror and loathing in their eyes, she was stung into action. Violently she denied the accusation and demanded her right to submit to trial by ordeal.

After a muttered conversation between the elders and the witch-doctor this demand was reluctantly agreed to; the headman warned all the assembly to keep their mouths tightly closed for fear that news of what was proposed should come 10 the ears of the District Commissioner or the police. Messengers were selected from among the men present to go out into the bush to find the rare mwabvi tree and to bring back a strip of its bark, and the woman herself was told to go to any empty hut and stay there until all was ready.

There was no need to lock her up, for this was a voluntary business, and if she chose to run away it would make the impending trial—with risk of discovery by the authorities—unnecessary.

Then, too, she knew all about trial by ordeal. Had she not heard the details many times at first hand from those who had actually survived it and who were themselves firmly convinced of the accuracy of the procedure. Did not their very presence prove it?

In good time the messengers returned with the mwabvi bark, and while the villagers lined up on the bwalo it was put in a calabash with some water and pounded into a pulp with a pestle. When all was ready the witch was brought from the hut, placed in the narrow lane between the assembled villagers and told to drink. Without hesitation she drained the noxious draught to the dregs, and was then grasped by the arm and walked up and down, up and down, between the rows of her former friends.

They watched her keenly, noting every movement of her eyes and of the muscles of her face, waiting for the poison to ake effect. If she vomited up the poison she would live and her innocence would be proved, but if she did not vomit she would die in agony, convicted of witchcraft both by the witch-doctor and by her ability to retain the poison in her stomach.

She did not vomit.

* * *

After the body had been interred in a grave away in the bush, the villagers went about their normal business, satisfied that a dreaded witch had been removed from their midst, and well content to know that the time-honoured trial by ordeal had once more proved its worth. The witch-doctor had smelled her out, and the mwabvi had confirmed the accuracy of his identification.

The only person who might have been able to challenge the efficaciousness of the proceedings said not a word. She was buried out in the bush.

Rumours of this affair trickled through to the police and after intensive questioning of some of the villagers the grave was located and the stomach was removed from the body for examination. Unfortunately, however, mwabvi is an alkaline poison which cannot be isolated and identified without a great deal of work, and the use of special equipment which was not available in Nyasaland, nor, for that matter, in Rhodesia. This meant that we could not establish the cause of death to the satisfaction of a court of law and, therefore, that we could not bring a charge of murder against cither the headman, the witch-doctor or those who were present at the trial.

Fortunately there is in Nyasaland a law which has the title 'Witchcraft Ordinance' and which was designed to meet just such cases as this. It is a serious offence under this ordinance for any person to administer mwabvi, to be present when it is administered, or to counsel or procure its administration. Action was taken under this law, and the headman and the witch-doctor were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

Any form of poisoning, whether malicious or accidental, is invariably regarded in Nyasaland as the result of witchcraft. If, therefore, a person becomes ill and dies after a meal in the house of another, his host or hostess is immediately suspected, and generally accused, of being a witch. In such cases it frequently happens that both the accuser and the accused will submit themselves to trial by ordeal, but the witch-doctor, anxious to keep up appearances, will take good care to ensure that the suspect gets a much more potent brew than the complainant, and the resulting death only serves to confirm in everybody's mind the justice of the trial. It would be very awkward, of course, if the party known to be innocent were found guilty and the guilty were proved innocent—rather like the victim of a robbery picking out a plain-clothes policeman brought

in to make up the number in an identification parade.

It is difficult to assess how many trials by ordeal take place in Nyasaland in this modern age, but it is likely that information only reaches the authorities in a small minority of such cases. There are also, from time to time, reports of human flesh being bought and sold to make medicine, but, fortunately, they are not very frequent; certainly witchcraft in Nyasaland does not begin to compare in magnitude with the problems which arise, for instance, in Basutoland, where ritual murders flourish in spite of all attempts by the police to stamp them out.

That country is supposed to be more civilised than Nyasaland, but many of the leading chiefs there are known to be implicated in the horrible business. A sinister aspect of these cases is that, to be effective as medicine, the flesh must be cut from the living body and that when this has been done the victim must be left to die; little or no attempt is made to dispose of the body.

From all the evidence it seems clear that the victims of these dreadful crimes frequently volunteer for the purpose, though they must well know what it entails. One wonders what inducements, what promises of glory in the next world, are held out to these poor wretches which will persuade them to submit themselves willingly to such treatment.

Another form of superstition which exists in Nyasaland and which shows its head from time to time is known as chifwamba. This is based on a theory that most Europeans are partial to a juicy African steak for their dinner. It is, I think, the African equivalent of "The bogy-man will get you if you don't watch out!" for clearly all the piccanins must be told the story by their mothers as soon as they are old enough to grasp it.

Particularly at the end of the summer, in April and May, before the tall grass has dried or been burned, it is difficult to get a lone African to approach a European on the road for fear he may be

kidnapped and eaten. The situation is not improved by the presence of an African servant with the European, for he is then popularly supposed to be there to act as a decoy. There is, I think, a psychological reason for the increased timidity during the long-grass period, for this is the time when wild animals and dangerous snakes can lie concealed quite close by, and—who knows?—perhaps there's a fat European there, too, waiting to seize his dinner.

Several planters who had the reputation of being chifwamba men were so boycotted by the Africans that they had no alternative but to sell their estates and leave the country.

My own experience of it was particularly unfortunate. We were having a spate of European burglaries of a particularly daring nature in Limbe which were brought to a head when a member of one of the additional police patrols in the area stumbled across the burglar, John Petros, alias Mitendc, actually carrying his swag, and got stabbed in the neck for his pains. As a result of this incident, I arranged for all available police from the Training School at Zomba to come over in trucks in plain clothes each evening, lay up in ambush in pairs at carefully selected spots covering all tracks and roads leading into and out of the town, and to be collected at strategic points at dawn the next morning. As far as possible, this was to be a secret operation, the ambushes getting into position and out again as inconspicuously as possible, but, of course, it was not possible for this to be done without some African or other stumbling over them in the dark and getting the fright of his life.

After the ambushes had been operating a few days without success, during which Mitende had not shown his hand, I decided to leave them out one more night and then withdraw them for a time. At dawn one of the two trucks which had brought the men over from Zomba left Blantyre, where it had spent the night, to travel along the five miles of road to Limbe to collect the men at the assembly point. About a mile out of Limbe the engine spluttered

and stopped because, as we learned later, there was dirt in the carburettor. While the police driver (in plain clothes) was trying to get it going again one of the stream of Africans carrying their produce along the road towards Limbe market recognised him as the man he had seen the previous morning collecting a bunch of young men from the outskirts of the town—presumably for his European master to eat. He therefore raised the cry, "*Chifwamba*" whereupon everybody in the vicinity set about the unfortunate police driver and started to beat him to death. He broke away and ran towards the Limbe Police Station, a mile distant, with the crowd in hot pursuit, past numbers of Indian stores, none of the owners of which lifted a finger to help him. Halfway to the Police Station, exhausted and terror-stricken, he was overtaken by the mob, and two minutes later he was lying dead in the gutter. A number of those who took part in the attack on him were tried for murder, and in due course the ringleader was hanged.

Mitende was captured soon after this incident and was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment; while he was serving it he took part in a riot in Zomba Central Prison during which a young police constable was killed, and for this crime Mitende was himself executed.

Chapter 39

JUDGES' RULES IN PRACTICE

"You are not obliged to say anything unless you wish to X do so, but whatever you say will be taken down in writing and may be given in evidence."

I suppose that, through the medium of radio, television, the stage and the detective novel, most people are familiar with these significant words, but I think that few of the general public are aware of their origin. This caution, which is given to an accused person when he is formally charged with an offence is, in fact, embodied in the "Judges' Rules", a code of conduct for the guidance of the police in the investigation of crime. The first four rules were formulated in 1912 by His Majesty's judges of the King's Bench Division, and the remainder were added subsequently to deal with points on which doubts have since arisen as to the proper interpretation of the law.

These rules are, in effect, the policeman's ten commandments, and for that reason it may be of interest to record them in full:

The Judges' Rules

1. When a police officer is endeavouring to discover the author of a crime, there is no objection to his putting questions in respect thereof to any person or persons, whether suspected or not, from whom he thinks that useful information may be obtained.
2. Whenever a police officer has made up his mind to charge a person with a crime, he should first caution such person before asking him any questions, or any further

questions, as the case may be.

3. Persons in custody should not be questioned without the usual caution being first administered.
4. If a prisoner wishes to volunteer any statement, the usual caution should be administered.
5. The caution to be administered to a prisoner, when he is formally charged, should therefore be in the following words: “Do you wish to say anything in answer to the charge? You are not obliged to say anything unless you wish to do so, but whatever you say will be taken down in writing and may be given in evidence.” Care should be taken to avoid any suggestion that his answers can only be used in evidence against him, as this may prevent an innocent person making a statement which might assist to clear him of the charge.
6. A statement made by a prisoner before there is time to caution him is not rendered inadmissible in evidence merely by reason of no caution having been given, but in such a case he should be cautioned as soon as possible.
7. A prisoner making a voluntary statement must not be cross-examined and no questions should be put to him about it except for the purpose of removing ambiguity in what he has actually said. For instance, if he has mentioned an hour without saying whether it was morning or evening, or has given a day of the week and day of the month which do not agree, or has not made it clear to what individual or what place he intended to refer in some part of his statement, he may be questioned sufficiently to clear up the point.
8. When two or more persons are charged with the same offence and statements are taken separately from the persons charged, the police should not read these statements to the other persons charged, but each of such persons should be furnished by the police with a copy of such statements, and nothing should be said or done by the police to invite a reply. If the person charged desires to make a statement in reply, the usual caution should be administered.

The first point to remember about these rules is that they were drafted as a guide for police in England, and I feel sure that the last thing the eminent and learned gentlemen who devised them had in mind was the practical difficulties which would inevitably arise in attempting to apply them in the farflung corners of the Empire. However, the members of the colonial judiciary have decreed that the rules should be applied equally wherever the British flag flies, and the members of the many colonial police forces have struggled nobly (though with varying success) to comply with their wishes.

Let us, then, examine them in the light of this position.

Rule 1 is straightforward enough: it provides that a policeman investigating a crime may ask questions of any person, *whether suspected or not*, when he thinks he may be able to help him.

Rule 2 requires a policeman who *makes up his mind* to charge a person with a crime to caution him before he asks him any questions. Makes up his mind ? What exactly does that mean, and who shall decide, the policeman himself, at what stage he made up his mind to charge the suspect? For myself, I always took the view that, as it was a serious matter to charge a person with a crime, I would not be justified in making up my mind to take such a step until I had sufficient evidence, firstly, to prove to the satisfaction of the court that an offence had actually been committed and, secondly, to show that my suspect had been the person who committed it. I found this formula stood me in good stead, and although on many occasions various magistrates and judges felt that I had taken a long time to make up my mind they were obliged to take my word for it.

But how different the position is for the local—and often illiterate—policeman in a place like Nyasaland. He may be miles out in the bush by himself, possibly sent out to investigate a minor case or perhaps doing a routine patrol through the villages, when

he receives a report of, say, a murder. He goes hot-foot to the scene and succeeds in catching the person who is reported to have committed the crime, just as he is about to flee over the nearby border of Portuguese East Africa, with which territory there is no extradition agreement. What does he do? He grabs the man, handcuffs him and starts off on a walk of perhaps thirty miles or more to the nearest police station. If he has any sense, too, he will try hard to remember the caution he was taught in the Police Training School and gabble it off to his prisoner, who will look blankly at him and wonder what on earth he is talking about. But when he eventually appears in the Court of Criminal Assize to give his evidence and the judge, an awesome spectacle in his robes and wig, which are obviously connected with the white man's witchcraft, looks over the top of his spectacles and says, "Did you caution the accused when you arrested him?" the poor policeman will reply in the affirmative and hope to heaven he will not be asked to say what form the caution took and what it meant.

The fact is, of course, that an illiterate constable is not really mentally capable of making up his mind whether to charge a person with a crime; he would do better not to caution him formally at all, but to leave that to his superiors in the police station. The trouble is, of course, that his premature cautioning (in theory, anyway) prevents any further questions being asked of the accused person during the course of the investigation, thus closing what might otherwise be a useful and permissible channel for obtaining information in connection with the crime in question—information which might well establish the innocence of the prisoner. However, if the judges want it that way, the African policeman is only too anxious to oblige.

Rules 3 and 4 provide for the usual caution to be administered before a person in custody is questioned, or when he volunteers a statement. This "usual caution" is not given, but it is in fact laid down in a Home Office Circular and reads as follows: "You are not obliged to say anything, but anything you say may be given in

evidence."

Rule 5 states that when a person is formally charged the first thing to do is to ask him the question, "Do you wish to say anything in answer to the charge?" before the actual caution is administered. The putting of this question seems, in my humble opinion, to be in flat contradiction to the instructions contained in Rule 2.

Rule 7 speaks of a prisoner making a voluntary statement. "Voluntary" as opposed to what? Having his arm twisted? Surely, in the absence of third degree, all statements, whether in answer to questions or not, are voluntary. And Rule 7, too, lays down that a person in custody who makes a voluntary statement must not be questioned except to remove ambiguity. Surely this is, on the face of it, in conflict with Rule 3, which says he must be cautioned before he is questioned? Or does it mean that once a person is taken into custody on suspicion he has only got to volunteer the statement "Bob's your uncle!" to the nearest copper to put the whole force immediately offside for the rest of the game.

There have been, of course, many judgments on the interpretation of these rules, some of which seek to prove that black is not black, but only a very dirty white. An example is the note which has been added to Rule 3, which states: "This rule was never intended to encourage or authorise the questioning or cross-examination of a person in custody, after he had been cautioned, on the subject of the crime for which he is in custody." Why put it in, then, for surely, if that is so, it is duplicated by Rule 7 ?

For myself, I have always thought that the rules are masterpieces of ambiguity, unworthy both of the part they are required to play in the administration of British justice and of the judges who made them. I do not believe it to be beyond the wit of man to lay down clearly and succinctly the rules under which the game should be played—rules which would be fair to both sides and which the judge, in his capacity as referee, could enforce impartially to the satisfaction of the general public on the touch-

line.

At present the odds are too heavily against the police team, who have to resort to all kinds of evasive play even to get a look at the ball, while the ref. tries with indifferent success to enforce rules which are both ambiguous and incoherent.

The situation was further complicated in Nyasaland by the existence of an official form entitled “Evidence of Arrest”, which had absolutely nothing to commend it. In the first place, it was not evidence of arrest at all, but a record that the prisoner had been charged and cautioned and of any statement he made—he might well have been arrested on suspicion a couple of days before. In the second place, it had printed at the top the caution laid down in the Criminal Procedure Code for the use of the examining magistrate at a preliminary enquiry (a further unnecessary complication to an already difficult situation); and, thirdly, it required a policeman to say that he had “warned, cautioned and charged” the prisoner with the offence. What he did, of course, was to charge and caution the prisoner in that order, and I was never able to understand to what the word “warned” was supposed to refer.

Some of the magistrates—who should have known better—would ask a police officer giving evidence, “Did you warn, caution and charge the accused?” I had never met this form, or any like it, either in Palestine or Trinidad. It was, I felt, an example of muddled thinking, and I was naturally curious to know whence it originated: it was said that it was imported from the B.S.A. Police in Southern Rhodesia by some of the officers who came up from there. If this is so, and it was copied correctly, then I can only say that it is no credit to the B.S.A. Police; if, on the other hand, it was not their creation, then I apologise for maligning that force.

Chapter 40

MUSIC AND MATEYO

During my next leave in 1950 I had the opportunity to attend, together with a number of other senior colonial police officers, a fortnight's course at M.I.5 and at the Special Branch, New Scotland Yard—an experience which I found somewhat disappointing.

I was told that I should always refer to M.I.5 by the name of the house in London in which it is accommodated. Accordingly, when I arrived at the correct street on the first morning of my course I enquired of a milkman standing on the pavement whether he could direct me to

House, and got the reply, "M.I.5, guv? That's it, over there!"

* * *

We returned to Nyasaland in the autumn of 1950, and I took up my new duties as Deputy Commissioner at Headquarters in Zomba. My new chief, Charles Apthorp, who had arrived on transfer from Basutoland just before I went on leave, presented me with a comprehensive list of my new responsibilities as second-in-command of the Force and, needless to say, I studied it with interest. Many of the items on it were matters with which I was already reasonably well acquainted—discipline, recruitment, training, finance, estimates, stores, housing, etc.—but one item, halfway down the list, caused me to pause and reflect. It said, succinctly, "Police Band".

I had seen the band often enough, of course, for it was the only

band of any kind in the country and was therefore required to play for all military parades and ceremonial functions, but I knew practically nothing about the organisation, composition and training of bands as a whole. I therefore took the first opportunity to visit them in their hide-out in the police lines.

The bandroom, if such it could be called, consisted of a small building with brick walls, mud floor and a roof of homemade tiles. The small windows had wooden shutters and no glass. It was raining when I paid my visit, and the members of the band were huddled against the walls trying to keep themselves, their instruments and their music stands clear of the rain (which was pouring in from many places in the roof) and at the same time trying to avoid having to stand in any of the large puddles of mud and water on the floor. There were sixteen of them, and I have never seen a more dejected, miserable, surly crowd of people in all my life. They watched me apathetically as I surveyed the scene, and even when I talked to them and told them that I would be personally responsible for their welfare in future and would do all I possibly could to improve their lot, I was quite unable to arouse a spark of interest in any single one of them.

The Gurkha Bandmaster, Shamsher Singh Khawas, himself no more co-operative, told me that they had heard it all before, many times, and how could anybody be expected to do a good job of work in these conditions ? I could only agree with him that they couldn't.

At his suggestion, I inspected the instruments; even to my untutored eye it was clear that they were in a terrible state. All were bent and battered, with the silver plate peeling off; some were tied up with bits of string and bootlaces while others appeared to have been welded or soldered by the local blacksmith. Not one of them was less than twelve years old, and some were well over thirty.

Obviously this was not going to be an easy part of my duties,

but as I thought the matter over during the next few days I became more and more convinced that it was a very important one. I came to the conclusion that, in like manner to the sports meeting, a really good band, properly used, could be of inestimable propaganda value to the Force, raising the morale of the men, enhancing its prestige with all sections of the community and attracting to the force the type of new recruit of which we were so badly in need.

At the same time I was fully aware of my own limitations in this connection, for I realised that, while I had a deep liking for all kinds of music, my technical knowledge of bands of this type was exactly nil. The only answer, therefore, was to learn, and this I set out to do.

There was in Zomba a prison officer popularly known (because of his lack of hair) as “Curly” McDougal, who had been a band sergeant in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders; I sought his advice and co-operation and he gave it most willingly, proving a tower of strength to me in my many problems.

The band, I learned, was a brass band, the only two reed instruments being two ancient alto and tenor saxophones, both of which were liberally festooned with bootlaces. The full complement of a brass band was twenty-six; of the sixteen now remaining, two of the key players—the soprano cornet and the alto sax, competent musicians, both—had refused to reengage and were due to finish their contract in a week or two’s time. The Ghurka Bandmaster informed me of this fact with, I thought, a gleam of satisfaction in his eye, adding that it would be quite impossible for the band to continue to function without them, and that it would be at least three years before replacements could be trained. It appeared that since the band was first formed in 1940 (with second-hand instruments purchased with funds provided not by Government, but by the general public) he had trained no less than ninety musicians, but most of them, their training completed, had left to join bands in Beira and Southern Rhodesia, where they could work and live in

reasonable conditions. Even so, the band had never been at such a low ebb as it was at that moment.

The Government was now providing the sum of £30 each year with which to buy new instruments, music and equipment. In addition the band earned a modest sum—perhaps £20 each year—for private functions. The only regular engagement it had was the weekly concert on Wednesday afternoons at the Zomba Gymkhana Club, at which, apart from children and their African nannies, the members of the band generally outnumbered the audience. The children were very much in evidence, and it was considered quite in order for them to play tag round the band while it was performing on the grass, frequently running between the musicians and their music stands and sometimes knocking them over.

After a couple of visits, during which I vainly attempted to have the children kept at a reasonable distance, I stopped these concerts altogether, and thus incurred the severe displeasure of some of the more senior Club members. It was not because they had any wish to listen to the band themselves, but they liked to know it was there, and it was one afternoon of the week when they could get the children off their hands.

The next problem was instruments. Clearly all, or nearly all, of them would have to be replaced if the band was to be able to play at all, and now we had to decide whether to continue it as a brass band or to seize the opportunity to change over to what is known as a military band, with its additional instruments in the shape of flute and piccolo, oboe, clarinets, bassoon, French horns and tympani. This is a more versatile, and more expensive, combination, but it has certain decided advantages over the rather limited brass band: there were several major obstacles to be overcome, however, including the learning of new instruments and of the bass clef by those already in the band, the recruitment and training of new men and, most important of all, money.

In the last matter my Commissioner did his stuff nobly and

managed to screw no less than £500 out of the Finance Committee of Government towards the several thousand pounds the new instruments would cost. While this was a good start, we still had a long way to go, and I therefore explored the possibility of starting a dance band from the existing musicians. Everybody I consulted was against it, although there wasn't a dance band in the whole country.

"They can't play dance music," said the Bandmaster, and the stalwarts of the Gymkhana Club echoed his sentiment, adding that, even if they could, they still wouldn't wish to dance to music provided by Africans, much preferring Victor Sylvester on records. There was, however, a so-called dance band section which was available for anyone who was foolish enough to hire it and, as it happened, I had the opportunity just after my arrival of hearing them play (for one hour only) at a dance organised by the British Legion, who liked to have some uniforms on the platform, however bad the music.

After I listened to that performance, played from brass band scores on three cornets, the two saxes, a euphonium, a tenor horn, a tuba and the big drum and side drum, I felt I could only agree with the Bandmaster. They certainly could not play dance music, but I saw no reason why they should not learn. In fact, I could see no other possible way of keeping the band in existence.

The next morning I saw an African walking down the road with a battered guitar slung over his shoulder and, after much haggling, I bought it from him for <$os. and told John Jika, the side-drummer, to learn to play it. That was the start of the dance band.

I heard that a Goanese doctor in Limbe had a piano for sale, for which he wanted £30. I drove over to see him posthaste and offered him a fiver for it. He was so disgusted that he gave it to me. We had no pianist, of course, but I found a constable in Limbe who had been trained at the Catholic Mission; he had been earmarked for the priesthood, but the prospect of lifelong celibacy had been too much for him. I was told that not only could he read tonic sol-fa, but that

he could actually play two hymn tunes on a harmonium. After giving him an audition, I felt this to be something of an exaggeration, but nevertheless he was the nearest thing we had to a pianist, and I therefore had him transferred forthwith to Zomba.

We put the piano in a cell adjoining the guardroom and we locked our budding pianist in there every morning and let him out every night. Once or twice a day my wife would go down and give him a lesson, and within three months he was able to play the simple accompaniment of half a dozen dance tunes and to look as though he was playing a dozen others.

Meanwhile, I was busy in other directions. My first task was to persuade the two leading players to renew their contracts; I almost had to go down on my knees to them, but at last I succeeded, and I am sure they never regretted it; they are both Sergeants now. I also sent for a really good cornet player who had left just before my arrival, and eventually enticed him to return. He is now an Inspector.

My next problem was the band room itself. The Government very kindly allocated the sum of £200 for it to be re-roofed, but for the big band and the new instruments we needed something far better than that. This was where Danny Morrison, an ex-Palestine policeman and then officer in charge of the Police Training School, stepped into the breach, aided and abetted by the Corporal Elia, who had converted the garage into an office in Blantyre. By an intricate system of scrounging and borrowing and juggling of funds, into the details of which I never dared enquire, they did not re-roof the band room; they built a new one, complete with metal windows and doors, concrete floors, plastered walls and corrugated roof. This was built in something under a month while the band were on leave.

When they returned and saw their new home and some of the new instruments which had started to arrive they really began to believe that we meant what we said and that life had taken a turn

for the better for them.

A few of our new instruments we bought in Rhodesia or South Africa, but most of them we ordered direct from the famous old music firm of Boosey and Hawkes in London, and very well they looked after us. Keeping my fingers crossed, I ordered far more than we had the funds to pay for, but I hoped that my dance band would provide the answer, and so it proved. They made remarkable progress, unwillingly and even resentfully at first, but when they saw and handled the shining new trumpets, trombones and saxes, the new drum set, the string bass, the piano-accordion, and eventually a brand new electric guitar, their interest was aroused, though it was a constant struggle to keep it alive; it was a long time before interest became enthusiasm, but, of course, the substantial share I promised them of any fees earned by the dance band helped to enlist their co-operation.

Our repertoire of dance music was very limited to begin with, and we were hard put to it to arrange a programme for a five-hour dance without repeating numbers played earlier. Eventually the day came when we were ready to accept engagements for our twelve-piece dance band—three saxes, three trumpets, two trombones, piano, drums, guitar and string bass —and our first job was at the Officers' Mess of the King's African Rifles in Zomba. We had a new uniform of white tunic and blue slacks for the occasion, and we created quite a sensation. The Governor, Sir Geoffrey Colby, was there, and he asked me what had happened to the band—he could see the new uniforms, but had we also got some new instruments? I refrained from telling him that they were all new instruments, and that I hadn't the least idea how I was going to be able to pay for them.

I think it is no exaggeration to say that that night saw the beginning of a new era in entertainment in Nyasaland. It also brought to light two other problems which had to be faced. Firstly, that being accustomed, like all Africans, to going to bed soon after

sunset, the bandsmen just could not keep awake and active until two o'clock in the morning; in fact, they had a disconcerting habit of dropping off to sleep just before they were due to take an eight-bar solo, so that the first four bars would be gone with only the accompaniment being played, by which time the Bandmaster had either kicked the soporific soloist on the shins himself to wake him up or had shouted to the man next to him to do so. Then the offender would sit up with a start and hastily join in, not infrequently at the wrong place. This problem I overcame, after consultation with my medical adviser, by the issue of half a tablet of benzedrine per man, to be taken just before the dance started; it worked excellently, and gave the players just that extra bit of zip necessary to keep them on the go until the Anthem was played.

My second problem—and this was more serious—was the fact that, as I quickly discovered, practically everybody in Zomba was an authority on dance music and how it should be played. At first I listened carefully to all the suggestions and criticisms: The waltzes were too slow; the waltzes were too fast. We played too many quicksteps; we didn't play enough quicksteps. The brass was too loud or not loud enough. Why didn't we play more of the latest tunes? Why didn't we play more of the old favourites? And, finally, why didn't we throw away all our music and make every number a jam session? This last one came from a gentleman who claimed to have played in a band in Nairobi for some years, but had now (understandably, I decided) given up trumpeting for auditing.

There are two kinds of dance bands in England which do not use the printed scores issued by the publishers: those at the top of the tree, which have their own arrangers, and those which lack either the ability or the necessary instruments to play them. We did not fall within either category; we had both the ability and the instruments, and it would have been pointless not to take advantage of the excellent orchestrations which were available. For this reason I did not feel able to oblige the auditor. I soon came to the conclusion that, little as I knew about dance music, my would-be

advisers knew even less, so I listened patiently to what they had to say and then went my own way.

Now I was reading the *Melody Maker* each week, and though there was little in the way of technical information in it, I did assimilate a good deal of dance band atmosphere from the contents. I also listened carefully to every programme of dance music I could find on the radio, and was thus able to select suitable numbers to order from England for our growing library.

My mainstay in all these activities was the senior African in the band—a young Sergeant named Mateyo. He was a member of the Lomwe tribe, and his forebears had obviously come up from Mozambique, for his name was Portuguese for Matthew. Mateyo was in the band more by accident than design, but it was a happy accident for all concerned. In 1940, when the band was formed, Mateyo's father, Numero, was a Sergeant Drill Instructor in the Police Training School in Zomba, and young Mateyo, a kid of fourteen who was living with him in the camp, was more or less shanghaied into the band. There was no provision for band boys in the force establishment, so he had been sworn in as a constable—probably the youngest in the history of the Commonwealth—and given a cut-down uniform. An old cornet had been thrust into his hand and he had been told to learn to play it. His basic education was, to say the least, sketchy, for he had not had more than a couple of terms at school in his whole life, and though he could speak both Lomwe and Chinyanja and could read a little, he could hardly write his own name.

Constable Mateyo (aged 14!), 1940

He was a handsome and likeable boy, however, and his intelligence was well above average, so that he quickly became a favourite in the camp and something of a mascot for the whole Force. Fortunately, too, he had a gift for music, and he had that elusive but highly desirable attribute for a musician, perfect pitch.

He took to his instrument like a duck to water, and very quickly was able to read and play anything which was put before him. Partly, perhaps, because he lacked the thin lips which are so important for a good trumpeter or cornet player and partly because he had no opportunity to receive expert coaching and to hear how masters of his instrument played, he never became a virtuoso, but what he lacked in brilliance of tone he made up in his excellent sight-reading, good execution and natural musicianship.

Here I must place on record something of the history of Mateyo's family—a history of service to the British Crown which would, I think, be hard to equal in any part of the Commonwealth.

Numero, Mateyo's father, had joined the King's African Rifles in 1901 when that famous regiment was first formed, and served with distinction as an askari in the Somaliland Campaign and in the First World War before transferring his affections to the police; over fifty-five years after he first donned a uniform he was still serving as a police sergeant.

In the absence of birth certificates, it is difficult in places like Nyasaland to fix a precise age for compulsory retirement, but it is generally reckoned to be between sixty and sixty-five, or earlier if illness or infirmity makes it necessary. Wondering when we might expect him to want to retire, I once asked Sergeant Numero how old he was; he considered for a moment, letting his old eyes beneath the grizzled brows travel slowly along the crests of the distant hills before he replied, "No, Bwana. I cannot say for certain, but I suppose I must be nearly sixty." And then, after another pause in which I did some mental calculations, he added with a grin, "But I'm not very good at arithmetic!" I asked him about his enlistment in the King's African Rifles at the end of the reign of Queen Victoria. He said he was very small and very young, but had no idea what his actual age had been.

"How, then, did they decide whether you were old enough to join the Army?"I enquired. Once more a slow grin spread over his

face as he replied: “No, *Bwana*. They just made us line up and lift up our right arms. If we had any hair there, we were in!”

Numero had two other sons, one with seventeen years’ service in the police and one with fifteen years to his credit. One is a Sergeant and the other a Corporal, but Mateyo, the youngest, now an Assistant Inspector, is the most senior in rank of them all. Quite a record, is it not, for a family of uneducated Africans from a little village in the bush?

Chapter 41

BRICKS WITHOUT STRAW

We might perhaps have expected that our house in Zomba would be an improvement on those we had occupied previously but, as it turned out, this was not the case. It consisted of two rooms, a pantry, store and lavatory downstairs and two rooms, a bathroom and a tiny dressing-room, up. The “kitchen”, as usual, was some way away down the hill.

As second-in-command of the Police Force, there were numerous occasions when it was desirable that we should offer accommodation to visitors, but, having two children and only two bedrooms, this was out of the question. Indeed, we were thankful that the children were still of an age where they could share a room.

The house was infested with bats and bees and termites and flying ants and cockroaches, though we now disposed of the latter with our deadly concoction of borax and sugar. The bees were a real nuisance only in the spring, when they were swarming. The largest of the three colonies in the house lived in the corner of the roof of the *khonde*, above the hardboard ceiling. On a bright afternoon—perhaps on a Sunday when we were trying to have a well-earned siesta—there would always be a few score of them buzzing around the bedroom, making sleep difficult; a sudden change in the pitch of the buzz, however, would denote rising excitement and the possibility of a swarm—it was then necessary to hop smartly out from under the mosquito net to close the windows in case the swarm came in, for that might result in us being marooned under our nets until dusk. We were all stung at various times, but while the stings seemed to have little effect on either my

wife or the children, with me they inevitably resulted in a very bad swelling of the affected part, making it necessary for me to stay in bed for some days.

The termites (commonly but erroneously called white ants) were, I suppose, the most destructive of our unwanted companions, but the house was not our property and, as the Government did not seem to worry unduly, neither did we. We did our best, of course, to limit their activities and had several successful hunts in nearby anthills to find and kill the flaccid, pulsating queens, but the workers were already well established in the woodwork and the foundations, and it would have been a major operation to eliminate them. On one occasion I undid the latch of the window in the passage by the downstairs lavatory and gave it a sharp push to open it, only to see the whole window, frame and all, disappear in to the garden below, eaten completely away by termites. A fortnight before it had been as solid as a rock.

The bats were the worst of all. They lived, in large numbers, in between the ceiling of the bedrooms and the corrugated iron roof. At dusk each evening they would emerge from under the eaves and fly off about their nocturnal duties, returning at dawn to hang upside down from the rafters for the hours of daylight. I never quite discovered how they managed their bodily functions in these circumstances—it all seemed so thoroughly unhygienic—but from the vast quantity of semiliquid droppings—droppings of a particularly unpleasant and pungent odour—which oozed through our celotex ceilings, it was clear that the habit of inverted suspension handicapped them in no way at all. Most mornings one or two of them would miss their landing and would wake us up flopping around the floor trying unsuccessfully to take off again. When this happened, rather than let the cat get them and inflict on us a crunching of bones which was almost unbearable, I would hop out of bed, chase them round the floor until I caught them and then launch them out into the garden, whence they would return to make a better landing.

Fortunately, the flying ants only bothered us during the mating flight at the start of the rains. Then, just at dusk, they would emerge from their holes in the ground in ever-increasing numbers until the air was black with them. They were irresistibly attracted to light, and so they made for the nearest and brightest lamp—generally in the house of a European.

As the first few fly in there is a rush to extinguish the lights, and the house has to remain in darkness until the flight is over—even the light of a radio is enough to bring them in. If, for any reason, the light is not turned off immediately, nor the door closed, the whole room will be teeming with the i-inch-long black bodies crawling over everything, while the long, iridescent wings, having been used for the first and last time, lie discarded and motionless on the floor.

Annoying though this may be to us, the mating season of the flying ants is a time to which many of the African children look forward with eager anticipation. One may see them, including the tiniest toddlers, squatting round the holes as the insects come out, catching them, pulling off the wings and eating the squirming black bodies with evident relish. And in the market you can, at this time of the year, buy whole baskets full of them, crisply fried to a turn by the women who offer them for sale.

In the summer of 1951 I seized an opportunity to make a flying visit to England and, although I was only at home for ten days, I was able, with the help of Boosey and Hawkes, to get a good deal of information and advice about the organisation and techniques of both military and dance bands and to study at first hand some of the leading bands actually broadcasting from B.B.C. studios. I also acquired a banjo and (optimistically, perhaps) two violins for use by the band, together with a copy of Adkins' *Treatise on the Military Band*, a valuable addition to my library which, during the next year, I learned almost by heart.

There were two primary reasons for this trip: firstly, to interview

at the Crown Agents in London applicants for appointment to the rank of Assistant Inspector in the Nyasaland Police and, secondly, to escort home a young gentleman who had got himself into a spot of bother with the law in Nyasaland. This man's name was Meagher, which he pronounced "Mar", and the following limerick which went the rounds at the time tells the start of the trouble which led to his summary departure from the country:

The Seaghergeagher of Meagher

An ex-jolly jack teagher named Meagher,
Biffed his boss on the beak in a beagher.
Than enough he'd had more
So he lay on the floor,
And Meagher drove off in a ceagher.

On my way home I stayed two days in Nairobi, most of which I spent looking round police headquarters there. What I saw made me realise that the standard of my own Force, which had been so backward, was not so bad after all. At that time Mau Mau had not been heard of, and each evening most of the white population seemed to be out and about in evening dress on pleasure bent. In some of the night spots a dinner jacket was an essential qualification for admission, while in one epicurean restaurant in which I tried to have dinner I was informed by the Swiss *maitre d'hotel* that all tables were booked for days ahead.

The Kenya Police had a big inspectorate drawn largely in those days from the Asian community. These Indian inspectors, I gathered, undertook most of the investigation of crime, and I suspect that, because of this, the African members of the force had not been trained and used as fully as they might have been. Very few of them were literate in any language, and I was informed that they were used principally for patrol and guard duties. I saw them creeping about the streets at night in pairs in their bare feet, and in uniform which was as bad as anything we had had in Nyasaland, and they certainly did not begin to compare with the standard of

smartness and bearing which we had by then achieved in our own Force.

On the Sunday morning I telephoned to Police Headquarters to try to locate an officer, but had to give up the attempt as I spoke no Swahili and the telephone orderly spoke no English, though English is one of the official languages.

Behind the Commissioner's offices at Headquarters was a collection of mud huts which, for sheer squalor, were worse than any we had in Nyasaland.

I watched the Kenya Police Band at practice and on parade, and here again I derived much comfort from the comparison with my own band. While the Kenya band had better instruments and more men than we had, the band was neither brass nor military in composition but a hotchpotch of both, and few of its members could read music. They had learned a number of tunes by heart, but were not capable, so the Bandmaster told me, of giving a full performance of concert music.

From my conversations with various officers of the Force, I gathered that it was the same old story: the country was peaceful and so there was no money available to enable the Police Force to attract the right type of recruit to it and to build up the effective security organisation which is so vital to the well-being of any country. Neither the Government nor the people, it seemed, were interested in the morale or efficiency of the police at that time, though they were to have good cause to regret it when Mau Mau raised its ugly head soon afterwards.

I went back to Nyasaland more than ever convinced that we were working on the right lines there and satisfied that we had much to be thankful for in comparison with our opposite numbers in the much bigger country of Kenya.

Meanwhile, the reorganisation of the Nyasaland Police went on

apace. Some, but not by any means all, of the Commissioner's persistent requests for big increases of funds were met, and those which were turned down were resubmitted in different ways. This culminated in the pair of us being summoned to Government House, there to be told by the Governor that the Chief Secretary had complained to him that we refused to take "No" for an answer.

His Excellency went on to prove that the police had had their share of what additional money was available, whereupon the Commissioner pointed out that the police had been sadly neglected in the past, and that what he was asking for was no more than the absolute minimum necessary to achieve the required standard of efficiency, and to maintain law and order in the country.

Our case was helped by a visit of inspection paid to us by the Inspector-General of Colonial Police, who was none other than my old and respected chief, Colonel Angus Muller from Trinidad. He endorsed fully our activities in his report to the Secretary of State and supported our request for the provision of decent living quarters for our men. For him, and for the newly-formed Special Constabulary, we staged a demonstration of riot drill, in which a small baton party and smaller tear-gas and rifle parties under European officers were called upon to deal with a rioting mob of several hundred Africans made up of all the police we could lay our hands on, led by tough European officers in plain clothes.

In order to make the thing as realistic as possible, the rioters were provided with large quantities of small canvas bags filled with sand to act as missiles, while the baton party had long canes instead of actual batons. Such was the enthusiasm with which the rioters went about their task that, when the tumult and the shouting had died, the C.I.D. Superintendent had a magnificent black eye and several other officers had a series of weals across their backs which looked as if they had received the cat. There were, too, a number of minor casualties among the Africans, some of which were caused by fragments of exploding tear-gas grenades, which in the excitement

had been thrown into the middle of the mob instead of to windward as they had been so carefully trained to do.

As an exercise it was nothing if not realistic, but I remembered at the time that the police had never been called upon to deal with a riot, and I could not help speculating whether they would display the same verve when faced with the real thing.

As a result of this visit and our continuous representations, funds were now made available for some fifty new African quarters to be built in brick in the police lines in Zomba, together with a smaller number at Blantyre, Limbe and other centres up country. We were thereby able to demolish an equivalent number of the more squalid mud huts which had worried us for so long.

Another innovation was the erection of a first-class barrack block, complete with electric lighting, wash-basins, showers and—unheard of in the history of African housing in Nyasaland—water-borne sanitation.

His Excellency the Governor of Nyasaland, Sir Geoffrey Colby, opens the new African Police Recreation Block in Zomba

This block was to house recruits in training and men brought in

for refresher courses; approval was also given for the building of a canteen, recreation-room, dining-hall and kitchens. When, in due course, these were completed and formally opened by His Excellency, we really felt that we were beginning to put the police in its rightful place in the land. There had never been a communal room of any kind in the camp, so that the recreation-room with its radio, electric gramophone, curtained windows and comfortable upholstered chairs was a revelation to the men. We managed to acquire a 16-mm. sound cinema projector with which we gave regular programmes of suitable films, including some excellent African films made in Southern Rhodesia.

The canteen presented something of a problem at first, as we did not know what sort of goods would be likely to sell well. However, we laid in a stock of foodstuffs, paraffin, tobacco, sweets and small sundries, and soon found ourselves branching out with shirts, trousers, English-made shoes and taking many orders for new bicycles at about £12 a. time. The manner in which our turnover increased and the demand for first-quality goods confirmed my view that there is a very big market for English merchandise waiting to be tapped in Nyasaland. Very often I would spend an hour or two of an evening serving in the canteen with the Corporal who was running it, and a most illuminating task I found it. The customers were most discerning in their choice of goods, and they certainly gave the lie to the theory, which seemed to be generally held among the traders in the country, that the Africans are interested only in trash.

The African Police Mess

In the spring of 1952 my Commissioner went on leave to England, and I found myself for the first time in command of the Force. The first thing I decided to do was to put on in Zomba a repeat of the sports meeting we had held some years earlier in Blantyre, and later in Limbe, but this time entries would be open to the whole Force and not only to personnel stationed in the Southern Province.

Once more the occasion was an outstanding success and well worth all the hard work it entailed. I think that everybody who was present, from the Governor downwards, spent a thoroughly enjoyable day, though we spared them a repetition of the Angoni war dance.

By way of light relief, Lou Dolivera, who was at that time in charge of the Training School, created a realistic two-man horse which not only smoked a pipe, but winked in a most cunning fashion. It was an instant success with the African members of the audience, who had never seen anything like it and who howled with delight at its antics. To add a little more colour to the “Get your Man” race, I arranged beforehand that some of the rioters

should appear to be knocked out by members of the police squad, who would then be obliged to carry them to the finishing line by a fireman's lift. Also, by previous arrangement, the smallest policeman was to have to carry the largest rioter, and when he reached a spot opposite the Governor's box he was to collapse under the weight, whereupon his prisoner would pick him up and carry him to the finishing Line. Unfortunately, this little bit of side-play was sabotaged by the Special Branch Superintendent, who, seeing the little policeman collapse most realistically and lie still, dashed out from the stand and started to administer first aid, thus preventing the prisoner from doing his job.

The day ended with the band playing "Abide with me" simultaneously with Mateyo sounding the Retreat on a bugle, while the spotlighted flag was slowly lowered—a most effective climax to the proceedings.

During this period the Superintendent in Blantyre, Bert Smith, and his Assistant Superintendent, Danny Morrison, put forward a scheme for building a new police station in Blantyre to replace the ramshackle building which had been used for that purpose for many years. There was behind this old building a large prison with a big compound which, owing to a reorganisation in the arrangements for the custody of long-term convicts, was now never required to accommodate more than a handful of prisoners at a time. The scheme was to build a large new police station in this compound and to wall in a small part of the existing buildings as a self-contained prison.

These two officers, in support of their suggestion, stated that they were prepared to undertake the work themselves, using as much penal labour as possible, at an estimated cost of £1,000, as compared with a figure of about £6,000 which the Public Works Department would require to do the work themselves.

I submitted this scheme immediately to Government, recommending it for approval, but increasing the estimated cost by

£500 just to be on the safe side. To my surprise, it was quickly sanctioned, and a sum of £2,000 was allocated for the purpose. The work was started immediately, but the penal labour which it had been intended to use proved a snare and delusion. In Nyasaland as in many other colonies persons sentenced to short terms of imprisonment are frequently released to the care of the District Commissioner, who is expected to direct them to perform suitable public work for the period of their sentence, going to their own homes to sleep each evening. The necessary number of these penal labourers, as they are called, was allocated by the District Commissioner to the job, but after the first few days they realised that they were expected to work really hard instead of sitting around doing little or nothing, and in consequence they just melted away. Those who were rearrested preferred to finish their sentences in custody.

In order to keep on schedule, therefore, Bert Smith, with the faithful and energetic Elia as his Foreman of Works, was obliged to hire labour, a factor which completely upset all his financial calculations. Nevertheless, the building was completed almost on schedule at a saving to the Government of some £4,000. The workmanship was of a very high standard, and the finished product was easily the best police station in the whole country, with adequate accommodation for many years to come.

The planning and directing of building operations, while not originally considered to be part of a policeman's job, was a task which many of them had to undertake.

One who could turn his hand to anything was Lou Dolivera (a Londoner born and bred, in spite of his name), who had also started his police career in Palestine, though I had not known him there. He had been stationed for some time at Bethlehem, and one Sunday morning, in the Church of the Nativity, he had fallen head over heels in love with a raven-haired, beautiful young girl who was in the congregation. He watched her leave the church with her family

and heard her speaking a strange tongue which he identified as Spanish. The same day he wrote off to obtain textbooks in that language and thereupon applied himself diligently to the task of learning his loved one's native tongue.

Each Sunday morning he watched her in church and worshipped her in silence until he felt he had acquired enough Spanish to speak to her and carry on a conversation. He had long since followed her home to find out where she lived and now, greatly daring, he knocked at the door of her house. As it happened, she answered the door to him: he addressed her with his carefully prepared opening phrases, only to be met by a look of blank incomprehension. With the arrival of her father on the scene he discovered to his dismay that the language he had heard her speaking was not Spanish, but Italian.

At first he received a cool reception from the girl's family, but in time they came to realise the intensity of the devotion which had actuated his linguistic efforts and eventually he was permitted to call at the house to press his suit. In this he was successful, for Doucy quickly came to return his affection, and in due course they were married in the Church of the Nativity, built on the site of the Manger itself. I never tired of hearing this story, for I felt it was a romance worthy of taking its place alongside that of Romeo and Juliet and other famous classics.

The Doliveras have two children of much the same age as ours, and in Zomba the four of them were constant companions.

In the financial estimates for 1953 provision was made for the building of a further twenty-six African quarters in the Police Camp in Zomba, but when the time came for the work to be started the Public Works Department announced that they had not the labour or supervisory staff available to undertake this work and that therefore they proposed to give it to an outside contractor. This would mean, in effect, that instead of twenty-six new quarters we should get only about eighteen for the same money, a serious

setback to our plans.

After a hurried conference at Headquarters we informed the Government that rather than lose these quarters we would build the lot ourselves, providing that the Public Works Department would make the necessary materials available for our use. This was agreed, and Dolivera was told to go ahead.

The first requirement, of course, was a large quantity of bricks, but when, in the middle of January, we asked the P.W.D. for these we were informed that there would be none available until the middle of the year, as the previous season's kilns had all been used up. In theory, because of weather conditions, the brickmaking season would not start until March or April, but Dolivera, with no previous experience at all, got down to the problem and quickly made and burnt no less than 2½ million bricks of excellent quality, having them all finished before the professional brickmakers had even started.

Before the year was half out the whole twenty-six quarters were completed, well within the money available, and in addition we had a large quantity of bricks left over which were put to a very good use on other projects—a first-class example of what can be done by a man of initiative and determination. I wish I could record that these officers who thus saved the country so much money received suitable recognition from the Government for their energy, initiative and devotion to duty, but, as so often happens, nothing of this sort came their way.

Bert Smith, a grand, practical policeman, retired from the Force soon after he had completed the building of Blantyre Police Station, and is now successfully running a hotel on the lake shore at Selima. Lou Dolivera, seeing another officer brought in from outside over his head and feeling that there was no future for him in Nyasaland, applied for and was given a transfer to Cyprus, where he is now serving as a Superintendent.

Both these officers were excellent Chinyanja speakers— among the best in the Force—and the gaps they left in the ranks will not easily be filled.

Chapter 42

CONCERTS AND CORONATION

At the beginning of 1953 my wife and I spent many evenings taking stock of our position and assessing what the future might hold in store for us. There were several important problems to take into account when planning ahead, not the least of which was our daughter Penny's health.

On a number of occasions, both in Blantyre and Zomba, she had been admitted to hospital suffering from a particularly stubborn bronchial condition, accompanied by a high temperature which could only be reduced by the use of large quantities of antibiotics, and we were reluctantly forced to admit that, as our doctor pointed out, it was unlikely that she would ever be really fit in a tropical climate.

The author with his family at Zomba

There was also the vexed question of education for the children. If we planned to send them home to boarding schools in England, it would mean that we should see them only when we were on home leave every three years or so; they would grow up with little or no family life, they would have to spend their long school holidays with anybody we could find who was prepared to take them in, and we, their parents, would be virtual strangers to them. We had seen too much of the unfortunate results of such arrangements to view it with equanimity for our children, for we were both strong believers of the importance of the family unit.

If, alternatively, we sent them to South Africa or Southern Rhodesia (always supposing we could get them into a suitable school, which was by no means certain) we should see them more often, but the education they would receive would not be likely to be up to the English standard. Either way, the cost of their education would have eaten a very large hole in our modest savings. Then, too, my own position had to be considered. I was now forty-five and eligible to retire on a reduced pension. At this age I felt that I might stand a chance of obtaining a reasonable position in England, but if I stayed on to the maximum retiring age of fifty-five, while my pension would be very much bigger, the prospects of then finding a job of any kind would be remote indeed. And I had no intention of putting my feet up on the mantelpiece at that age and waiting to die. On the other hand, I loved my job and the responsibilities and problems that went with it; I had worked hard and gained for myself a good status and an adequate salary, and it seemed not unreasonable to expect that I might in the not-too-distant future be offered a force of my own to command.

All these factors we weighed carefully, examining the pros and cons in detail, and spending many sleepless nights in the process. To retire or to carry on? Now was the time for the decision to be taken once and for all. With the greatest reluctance I submitted my resignation from the Colonial Service, to take effect from the end of my forthcoming leave, which was due to start in July, 1953, and

then set about cramming as much work as I possibly could into my last few months.

The band was now well established and going from strength to strength. All the essential new instruments had been obtained—and paid for from the earnings of the dance band— and we had a good library of music for the military band, which was now performing regularly with its full complement of thirty-six musicians. We had every reason to be satisfied with the high standard it had reached; our own estimate of its quality was more than confirmed by a high-ranking general, who, visiting the country on a mission from the Colonial Office, commented to me after hearing the band perform: "I have had very many famous Army bands under my command during the course of my Army service, and I have always taken a particular interest in them, for I contend that a good band is as valuable as a couple of battalions of soldiers. I have heard *Egmont* very many times, but I have never heard it played better than your band played it for me today." High praise, indeed!

The Nyasaland Police Band

The dance band meanwhile was in great demand for dances all

over the country, and there was now no suggestion that people preferred to dance to gramophone records or that they objected to Africans playing for their dances. They were particularly good at numbers in the Latin-American idiom, and of these, the mambo was certainly the most popular with the band. This was before it had become well known in England, and I found that when I put the word “Mambo” on the programme for a dance (all of which I prepared myself) people were scared of it, but when I described it as a rumba they loved it and shouted for more.

The musicians were now very versatile, playing the instruments appropriate to each type of rhythm: for Dixieland music we would include a banjo instead of guitar and a tuba instead of string bass, for tangos and waltzes there would be two violins and an accordion in place of some of the brass, and for Latin-American tunes we had a full set of Edmundo Ros’s authentic percussion instruments. All the saxes now doubled on clarinets, but undoubtedly the most versatile of the lot was John Jika, the side-drummer for whom I had purchased the guitar. In addition to being an excellent guitarist, he now played banjo and accordion, and has since become the flute and piccolo player for the full band.

The dance band was in great demand also for African dances, at which they would change their style and play an entirely different rhythm known locally as *saba-saba*, which has since reached the top of the hit parade in England in the number called, appropriately enough, “Zambezi”. They had a wide variety of tunes in this rhythm, many of which were recorded by a visiting recording unit from Johannesburg and subsequently achieved a wide sale throughout Central Africa. The recording engineers, who were only interested commercially in the African tunes, attended a European ball at the Zomba Gymkhana Club at which the band was playing, and I found their comments equally satisfactory. One of them said —and I remember his words precisely: “It is inconceivable to find a band of this calibre in a place like Zomba. We have nothing to compare with it in Johannesburg.”

My wife and I often went to watch the dances in the African recreation-hall, and most fascinating they were. The men wore the widest possible variety of dress, full tail coats with coloured shirts and brown shoes, frock coats, plus fours, shorts, jerseys, dinner jackets with gym shoes, caps, bowlers—anything. The women sported an equally varied assortment of garments, from full-length evening dresses (generally far too tight for comfort) to Mother Hubbards and the usual lengths of black cloth wound round and tucked in under the arm. The evening dresses were often set off by a woollen tam-o'-shanter on the head, and frequently a young baby would be tied on the back with a length of cloth, sleeping soundly through all the noise and the jolting.

The vital statistics of many of these women were most impressive, though, unlike the young ladies in England and America who have of recent years achieved greatness by kindness of Mother Nature, their physical development seemed to be concentrated in the buttocks, which they had the ability to waggle most effectively. I rather felt that it was a pity the Black Bottom and Boomps-a-Daisy were no longer fashionable—they must surely have presented quite a spectacle!

Some of the dancers went round in pairs with their partners, the men generally with cigarettes dangling from the corner of their mouths and their caps on the back of their head, but frequently they preferred (to use a phrase popular with politicians these days) to "go it alone", the men jigging round the room with their left hands in the air and their right held out in front of them chest high, doing fancy steps while they gazed glassily into the eyes of their imaginary partners. Or some of the men would dance together, leaving their womenfolk the option of sitting that one out or also dancing with each other. It seemed to me, as I watched, that so inferior was the status of the African woman that most of the men would have preferred not to have the opposite sex there at all, and only tolerated them because it was the done thing in the European society they were trying to emulate.

We also had a flourishing concert party, made up of members of the band, which gave suitable shows in Zomba and elsewhere for all sections of the community. We had some useful vocal talent and, in Grey Mtila, the second trombone, an outstanding light comedian with a most likeable personality who would make a hit in any country. He was tall and thin, with pleasant, mobile features, a winsome smile and an attractive voice with which he sang African love songs to the accompaniment of John Jika's guitar.

I spent many evenings teaching Grey a number of conjuring tricks which in due course he performed to the strains of the Eton Boating Song. These tricks were, of necessity, mechanical at first, but he soon developed some skill with his hands and, as he was a born showman, he was able to put the whole act over and hold his audience enthralled without using a single word of patter.

But undoubtedly the best turn was one I devised myself in what I felt was a moment of inspiration. The act began with John Jika announcing in front of the curtain that he had a friend with him who had been born without arms but had just had a pair made for him in the hospital by the local doctor. It was considered that these new arms were very successful, but perhaps the audience would like to see for themselves. The curtain was then opened to disclose Grey, in a white jacket, sitting on a seat against the back curtain, with his hands folded in his lap. John went up and shook hands with him, and accepted the cigarette and light which Grey offered him. To demonstrate his new arms Grey then played the trumpet, guitar and bongoes successively, while John accompanied him on another guitar. After a good deal more patter and side-play of a similar nature John enquired whether Grey wore his new arms in bed, to which he replied that in fact he left them off at night. He then hooked his two hands in loops suspended from the curtain, got up and walked away down stage, leaving the coat and the two arms hanging up behind him, his own shirt sleeves dangling empty at his sides. The first time we put on this turn the mixed audience were stunned into silence, broken only by a long-drawn-out gasp of

incredulity from the Africans; although they had been told they were not his arms, so natural were the movements of the man behind the curtain and so good the teamwork of the two of them that not one member of the audience realised that they were the arms of a different person they had been watching.

Grey was so thin that his own arms could be put down inside his shirt and trousers and his belt fastened without making his body look unduly broad, and Neckson Chimwale, the man behind the scenes, had long, thin arms which were able to come in through slits in the back of the armholes of the coat, reach round in front of Grey's body and still look completely natural.

The playing of the bongoes and the guitar were comparatively simple acts; the trumpet playing, with Neckson doing the fingering and Grey the blowing, was more difficult, and I would not suggest that the result was such as to cause Eddie Calvert to lose any sleep. Producing this turn was a lot of fun, and the other members of the concert party who were present when we were rehearsing were doubled up with uncontrollable laughter. I watched them through the tears of mirth which were rolling down my own cheeks, and remarked the contrast between them then and the miserable, sullen faces I had encountered when I paid my first visit to the bandroom a couple of years earlier.

We closed the curtain before the audience had time to realise quite how the trick had been done; when the applause broke out, as I knew it would, we opened them again to show the tableau of the unattached arms hanging motionless in the centre of the stage with John and Grey down stage on either side looking back at them. After a short pause, John walked upstage to the arms, lifted one out of its loop and began to examine it carefully; a moment later he started to bend the thumb back as though to break it off, whereupon the two disembodied arms quickly took up a fighting attitude and knocked him head over heels. As he lay there on his back staring in his bewilderment at the arms the curtains finally

closed amid such tumultuous laughter from the audience that the next act was delayed for quite a time. Although the element of surprise was lost after the first performance, the Africans never ceased to enjoy this turn and to ask for it to be done at every opportunity

As far as I know, this was .completely original, and I have never seen or heard of a similar act in England. It would, I think, go down very well on television and would lose nothing by comparison with much of the material one sees on that medium nowadays.

Grey Mtila was also being trained as our Drum Major, and very smart he was at it, too. I had to overcome the paucity of his chest measurements by having made for him a sort of Mae West or Billy Bunter waistcoat which he donned under his tunic. This made him look rather like a pouter pigeon and must have been acutely uncomfortable to wear in the hot weather, but he obviously loved it and never complained.

The Coronation was now close upon us, and, of necessity, the whole of the music for the celebrations had to be provided by the Police Band (though the newly-formed band of the King's African Rifles joined in to the best of its very limited ability on the big ceremonial parade on Coronation Day). Shamsher Singh, the Gurkha Bandmaster, was on leave in India, so that Mateyo had the very great responsibility of conducting at all the concerts, garden parties and at the four big Coronation balls given by the different communities in Blantyre and Zomba—a total of no less than seventeen engagements in ten days. In addition, I had blithely agreed some months earlier to provide a theatre orchestra to play for the three performances of a variety show to be put on by Zomba Europeans in their Club and in Limbe. The producer had assured me that he would obtain the necessary music for the special numbers which the Choral Society would be singing and which the orchestra were to accompany, but when it came to the point all I got was a piano score of Merrie England and a gramophone record of another

choral number, taken from a popular musical show then running at home. I wired off immediately to London to secure the orchestral parts, only to be told that they had all been hired out long ago—apparently everybody had the same idea about suitable music for the occasion.

In desperation, I took Mateyo and his first trumpet, Saidi Chisali, home with me and three nights running we sat up until nearly dawn working out the orchestral scores for our various instruments—a task at which Mateyo and Saidi had had but little experience and I had had none. In addition, we had to plan the numbers for all the dances, together with the overture and the interval music, and attend evening rehearsals at the Zomba Club, so that one way or another we all had a most hectic period before and during the celebrations.

Our own contribution to the festivities, apart from the work of the band itself, was a show put on by the police concert party, and it was at this that the turn I have already described made its first appearance. Peter Long, our C.I.D. Superintendent, built a fine open-air stage on the parade ground especially for the purpose, and the dark bulk of Zomba Mountain in the background made a very suitable setting for a memorable occasion.

Have I perhaps written at undue length about the band and my connection with it? If so, I crave indulgence for being carried away by my own enthusiasm. Let me say, in extenuation, that the work I did in this direction and the results we were able to achieve in the face of general scepticism and, sometimes, obstruction, was one of the most satisfying facets of the whole of my police service. It was both constructive and tangible, in sharp contrast to so much of a policeman's work, which is often, of necessity, destructive or nebulous. And it proved to me that, contrary to the views of so many people, given the right sort of encouragement and leadership, the African is capable of rising to great heights.

I did not, of course, neglect any of my many other duties and

responsibilities, but most of them were largely matters of routine and none of them was so engrossing nor so rewarding as my efforts with the band. Certainly the band contributed more than any other factor towards the fulfilment of my three avowed objectives—namely, to improve relations between the police and the public, to raise the morale of the men already in the Force, and, finally, to attract to it as recruits the very best type of young man the country could produce.

Chapter 43

REMOVAL OF A CHIEF

I had hoped to be able to complete my service in Nyasaland without becoming involved in civil disorders such as had come my way on a large scale in Palestine and, to a much smaller degree, in Trinidad. The familiar pusillanimous vacillations of the Government at home, however—the same inability to decide on a sound policy and to follow it through, which had turned the hand of both Arab and Jew against us in the Holy Land—was to make this impossible.

During the previous year there had been much talk about the proposed federation of Northern and Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland into one compact unit, with a central federal government responsible for defence, finance and other items of major policy, but with each of the federated states retaining a good deal of autonomy in other matters. Of the three territories concerned, Northern Rhodesia, with its extensive and profitable Copper Belt, was by far the richest, while Nyasaland was very much the poor relation, with no assets other than its labour potential.

For the country in general, therefore, it seemed certain that federation would permit far greater development than would otherwise be possible, but the African community was suspicious of it, fearing that it would result in an influx of Europeans, the importation of discriminatory laws and an extension of the colour bar.

Two successive Secretaries of State for the Colonies, Messrs. Arthur Creech Jones and Jim Griffiths, paid a fleeting visit to the country, and when these fears were expressed to them assured the Chiefs and Native Authorities that federation would only be

implemented with the approval of the African community. This was an entirely new and bewildering situation in which the Africans found themselves; on all matters of major policy they were accustomed to the Government telling them what was to be done and making any laws necessary to bring it about. Sometimes, in matters such as the contour terracing of cultivated land, they could not immediately see the necessity for the regulations, but from long experience they had come to trust in the wisdom of the Government and to believe that there must be a good reason for what they were required to do. Now, for the first time since Livingstone discovered the country, they were being asked to agree to a new policy in advance and they felt (not unnaturally, in the circumstances) that something funny must be going on. They therefore turned in their perplexity to their District Commissioners, their trusted friends and sound advisers in problems large and small, only to be told, on strict orders from above, that this time they had to make a decision on their own judgment, and that the D.C. could not advise them either way.

Now they were sure there was a catch in it; not only were they being forced to make the decision themselves, but they had been deprived of the reliable counsel of their customary mentors. They remembered the talk of racial discrimination and, encouraged by a handful of agitators in the African Congress (a body of semi-educated Africans, mostly Government clerks who until now had had no power and little following in the land), turned the proposal down flat.

It would be difficult to conceive any method of introducing federation which could be more wrong psychologically than this had been. The result was inevitable—just as inevitable as the fact that federation would go through in spite of the assurance of the Secretaries of State and notwithstanding the united African opposition to it.

This, then, was the position when, in May, 1953, we were

honoured with a visit from the Reverend Michael Scott. Mr. Scott was an Anglican parson who had achieved fame by championing the Herero tribes in South-West Africa in their fight against the South African Government, which he did so effectively that when he left that country he was forbidden to return. He then pleaded their cause before the United Nations and, I believe, he did so very eloquently. I know little of the circumstances surrounding that matter, and I have no reason to doubt that there was a good deal of justice on his side. Certainly we did not allow his earlier activities to prejudice us against him when he came to Nyasaland; indeed, we hoped that when he knew the facts his counsel might prevail upon the African leaders to view the proposed federation in a more rational light.

He was, therefore, given every facility to move freely around the countryside, meeting and talking to whomever he liked. Even when it was clear that resistance was stiffening in his wake, no attempt was made to restrict his activities in any way.

And then Philip Gomani, Paramount Chief of the southern Angoni tribe, issued an order to his followers telling them to disobey the Government and cut down any trees they wished, in contravention of the forest conservation rules. At this time Gomani himself was far away from his headquarters in the Ncheu District, in the mission hospital at Malamulo, where he was being treated for Huntingdon's chorea, a progressive and incurable disease, the symptoms of which are jerky and uncontrollable movements of the limbs which become exaggerated and violent if the patient is excited. His son, Willard Gomani, an ambitious young man in his early twenties with a marked proclivity for flashy European clothes, who was also one of his father's official counsellors, was running things in his stead back at Ncheu.

The order was signed by the old man himself; he was not so ill that he could not realise the significance of what he had done, but it was highly improbable that he had instigated this flagrant

disobedience to authority of his own volition.

A day or two after the order was issued it was learned that Michael Scott was planning to address a large public meeting of Angoni tribesmen in Ncheu, at which a number of other Native Authorities and members of African Congress were to be present. Such meetings could only be held under permit from the District Commissioner; in view of the incitement to disobedience which had taken place, an application for a permit would not be likely to be granted unless it were quite clear that the purpose of the meeting was to urge the people to obey the law and not break it.

The Commissioner of Police, Charles Apthorp, and myself were summoned to a conference at Government House, where it was decided that I should go to Ncheu with a party of police very early on the day of the proposed meeting in order to ensure that it was not held unless the District Commissioner's permit had been granted. I took with me a couple of junior European officers and some sixty African policemen, all of whom, with the exception of a handful of N.C.Os., were recruits in the middle of their initial training, their ages ranging from eighteen to twenty-two—not by any means the sort of force one would wish for on such occasions, but the fact was that, so thin were we on the ground, we had absolutely no other reserves to call upon.

Apart from myself, not one of us had had any experience in dealing with disorderly crowds, let alone riots or disturbances. I hoped, devoutly, that the same lack of experience would apply when we returned, for while I kit that our men were good basic material I was unhappy as to the turn events might take if it came to a showdown.

The meeting was scheduled to take place in the afternoon, and we hung about the *boma* at Ncheu all the morning. Jack Olivier, the Deputy Provincial Commissioner, had been sent down from Lilongwe to strengthen the D.C.'s hand.

No application had been made for a permit to hold the meeting, but Scott and his companions were known to be at one of Gomani's villages not far away from which they could only reach the place where the meeting was to be held by coming along the track which ran past the *boma*.

Early in the afternoon one of my scouts signalled that some cars were coming along the track, and the Deputy Provincial Commissioner, the District Commissioner, Ian Nance, and I went out to meet them. Scott and several chiefs and counsellors were in the cars, and they clustered round my companions while I stood on one side listening. The D.C. explained to Scott that—as the chiefs present knew very well—a permit was necessary before the meeting could be held, and said that he was ready to hear immediately any application they might wish to make.

The whole party then adjourned to the courthouse, where the application was duly made and, because no assurances were forthcoming as to the nature of the meeting, refused. The party then went back to their cars, where I stopped Scott and spoke to him. I asked him whether in the circumstances he and his companions intended to proceed with the proposed meeting, reminding him that, because of his calling, he would certainly answer me truthfully. He said, "I cannot answer your question." I pressed him, but he still refused to reply, so I said to him, "It is clear to me that, in the absence of any answer to my question, you and your friends intend to hold this meeting, even though you know it is against the law. Very well. But let me tell you this. If you do attempt to hold it in defiance to the law it will be my duty to prevent you. I must warn you that I have ample forces at my command and that I shall take immediate and effective action to disperse the meeting and arrest the ringleaders, using any force which may be necessary to do so. If, as you claim, you are a man of peace, you will now use all your influence and powers of persuasion to see that the meeting is not held."

He looked at me long and thoughtfully, and then went into whispered conversation with his friends. After a long discussion he turned back to me and said, “We have decided not to hold the meeting.” I said, “Can I have your word that the meeting will not be held?” He replied, “Yes.” I thanked him for his wise decision and told him that, on the strength of his assurance, I would not send my main party of police to the scene. He said he would go off at once, with one car only, to the meeting-place to cancel the arrangements previously made, returning to the *boma* without delay.

Half an hour later, as he had not returned, I drove along the road with a couple of policemen in my own car, and met him coming back. We got out to talk in the middle of the roadway, and Scott assured me that the meeting had been duly cancelled. As we talked I studied him carefully. He was very tall and as thin as a match. His cheeks were sunken and he needed a shave, but the fire in his belly was reflected in the fierce light in his eyes, the eyes of a fanatic.

I thought how ill he looked—ill and half-starved—and I remembered that my own lunch of sandwiches and a flask of tea was lying uneaten in my car, although it was after three o’clock. “Have you had your lunch yet?” I asked.

“No, not yet,” he replied, waving the question aside as a triviality.

“Have you had any breakfast? Have you had anything at all to eat to-day?” I persisted.

He thought for a moment. “No, I don’t think I have. No; I’m sure I haven’t.”

With some difficulty I got him to drink the tea, but although I tried my hardest he flatly refused to eat anything.

I left him there and went back to the *boma*, where my men were sitting around in the open waiting for the next move. Soon after

Scott and his companions arrived and while the African leaders went in to talk with the District Commissioner once more, Scott himself walked up and down with an African baby in his arms, smothering it with kisses and caresses.

After a discussion with Jack Olivier and Ian Nance, I decided, on the strength of Scott's promise about the meeting, to withdraw my forces and return to Headquarters. I felt that the psychological value of our display of strength would be weakened if we remained at Ncheu for no good reason and would give the people concerned an altogether exaggerated idea of their own importance.

We completed our sixty-mile journey back to Zomba in the best of spirits, and drove into the Police Camp with the recruits singing "We are the tigers!" For my part I was thankful that Scott had not called my bluff and gone on with the meeting, for so young and green were they that I was not at all certain how these tigerish qualities which they now extolled in song would have developed if it had come to a showdown.

The next night a car full of relatives and counsellors made the journey to Malamulo Hospital, took Philip Gomani out of his bed and carried him back to his headquarters at Ncheu. Although the old chief had actually signed the notice inciting his followers to commit acts of civil disobedience, it was certain that this had been instigated by his family and by other Native Authorities, who felt, with justification, that the Government could take no action against him while he was a patient in hospital.

However, he had gone back to take up the personal leadership of his people once again, and now, from the point of view of the Government, the issue was more straightforward. As a Native Authority, he was also a paid servant of Government, charged with maintaining law and order in his area, and he had more than failed in his duty. He must therefore be prevailed upon to withdraw the notice which was causing all the trouble.

Once more the Commissioner and I were called to a conference at Government House, where it was decided that the Deputy Provincial Commissioner should see Gomani and urge him to withdraw the offending notice, with the alternative of banishment from his area until such time as he was prepared to obey instructions. It was also decided that I should return immediately with my men to Ncheu and there stand by while the negotiations between the administration and Gomani were in progress. I opposed this arrangement on the grounds that, if it became necessary to remove him by force, it would be far better to go straight in when the time came, get him and get out again without delay. I knew too well the demoralising effects of keeping parties of inexperienced policemen kicking their heels while political discussions are going on, especially men as young and green as those we were obliged to use. My objections were overruled, but subsequent events gave me no reason to change my opinion.

On May 24th, therefore, we went back once more to Ncheu and set up • a temporary camp in the boma there. My party this time consisted of one Assistant Superintendent (Frank Chevallier), two European Inspectors (Llewelyn and Gorham), three African Sub-Inspectors and sixty-two other ranks—a grand total of four Europeans and sixty-five Africans. As on the previous expedition none of the party, myself excluded, had had any experience in dealing with civil disturbance. Of the Europeans Chevallier and Llewelyn had about three years' police service behind them, while Gorham had less than a month; of the African inspectors one was a Special Branch man and another was the Force Transport Officer—only one had practical police experience and training.As I anticipated, we spent two days waiting about while the administrators tried, without success, to get Gomani to see reason, and then, on the evening of Monday, May 25th, Inspector Logan arrived from Zomba, bearing an order signed by the Governor suspending Philip Gomani from his duties and requiring him to reside in the Cholo District (in which Malamulo is situated) until further notice. The order further directed his immediate removal

from the Ncheu District by the police. Logan arrived driving a big Chevrolet car in which it was planned that Gomani should be taken back to the hospital when the order was served on him.

When the negotiations with the D.G. broke down, Gomani and his followers, together with the Reverend Michael Scott, went off to Gomani's country headquarters at the village of Lizulo on the Lilongwe Road some twenty miles further on from Ncheu.

Early the next morning the police party left for Lizulo to execute the Governor's order. My information was that there would be no violent resistance to the Chief's removal, but it was certain that they would be expecting us and, equally certain, that they would not be at all pleased to see us.

Gomani's house was situated some 300 yards along a track leading off the road; my plan was to drive up to the house with the Chev and one police truck, leaving the main party on the road near the beginning of the track, where they would remain unless I called them on the radio to come in. Frank Chevallier was charged with executing the Governor's order, Logan was driving the car, and Llewelyn and Gorham were in charge of the reserves on the main road. My own function was the overall command, to decide upon and direct any action which might become necessary to effect our purpose.

At 7.45 a.m. we drove up to the house as arranged, turned the car round outside the house and parked our small radioequipped Bedford truck in a small open space near the house. There were about 500 people assembled on the ground in front of the house and, from the cooking fires which were burning and other signs, it was clear that they had been camping there all night.

A flight of about ten wide steps led on to a covered khonde and, as Frank Chevallier and I went up and towards the open door, we could see a large number of people—forty or fifty of them—standing around in the large living-room. Among them were the

two sons, Willard and Samson Gomani, Michael Scott and most of the Chief's counsellors. We entered the room, and Frank asked Willard to call his father. A moment or two later the old man came in from the back khonde and was promptly surrounded by the people present and escorted over to the Chief's chair against the opposite wall. Frank elbowed his way through them and informed the Chief in Chinyanja that we had come to execute an order from the Governor, the contents of which he explained to him. He then proffered the original t*pf the order to Gomani, who refused to take it. Frank thereupon put the order on the old man's lap and he promptly knocked it on to the floor. Frank then told him that he must accompany us, and that there was a car waiting to take him back to hospital.

At that moment Scott came up to me and said, "Can we not talk this over for a while?" I pointed out to him that there had been two days of talking it over before the Governor had been reluctantly obliged to issue the order. The time for talking was now past. We had a job to do and we intended to do it. I added: "You have given these people plenty of advice in the past. Now is your chance to give them some good advice. Gomani is to be taken back to Malamulo Hospital, where he will be properly looked after. If you have any influence over him, now is the time to use it and thus avert serious trouble." Scott replied: "He does not want to go back to Malamulo. He wants to stay here—his place is here. If you must take somebody, take me!" A heroic offer, perhaps, but not very practical in the circumstances.

Willard then asked for time for his father to dress for the journey, and this I agreed to, so long as he got on with it. He was then escorted down some steps into the bedroom, Frank and I going with him to make sure he was not whisked away through the back door. With a good deal of urging, he completed his dressing, his complaint causing his arms to wave more and more violently with the excitement of the occasion. Meanwhile, everybody in the house was approaching me one after the other and in groups, complaining

about the order and telling me how ill the old man was.

Eventually we urged him up the steps into the living-room and slowly pushed our way through the arguing crowd of people towards the door. When we at last got him on to the khonde we found that the area was filled by a mass of people of both sexes—far more than the original 500; the steps were choked with them and the car engulfed. When we reached the top of the steps Gomani started to address them, so we tried to take his arms and move him gently but firmly down towards the car. Willard, meanwhile, had planted himself squarely in front of us and was urging the people not to let us through. I noticed that Michael Scott had produced a movie camera and was busy taking a film of my actions.

When our efforts to get the old man down to the car failed, I pushed my way through the crowd towards the radio van, and the people on each side just leant forward on to me with their hands by their sides as I struggled to get through. When Scott followed me I was interested to note that for him they leaned backwards, opening up a lane through which he could move at will. I got to the truck and told Llewelyn by radio to bring up his men, form them up at a safe distance and prepare to use tear gas if and when I gave him a prearranged signal. I waited the few moments until they arrived so that I could explain the situation briefly to him and, as I turned to go back to the house, I saw Willard shouting at the Special Branch Inspector and snaking his fist in his face.

I went up behind him, arrested him and marched him back to the trucks, where I told Llewelyn to put him under close guard. All this time Scott followed me with his camera.

I got back to the khonde after a hard struggle, to find that progress was still impossible. A few moments later, to my surprise, I saw Willard Gomani come through the crowd again and resume his harangue. (As I learned later, Llewelyn had put him in the custody of a sergeant-major, who, overcome by fright at the idea of having the son of one of the major chiefs in his charge, had succumbed to

the prisoner's threats and had released him.)

It was now abundantly clear that the crowd were determined not to permit their Chief to be removed, and I therefore gave the signal for gas masks to be donned and for a barrage of tear smoke to be laid down. Llewelyn went into action at once and, as the smoke went up from the generators which had been thrown, the crowd started to scatter in all directions.

Many of them made straight at the ranks of police and, such was the force of their rush, burst right through them, scattering the young recruits to right and left.

As the people on the steps dissolved I held on to Gomani and looked for Frank Chevallier, only to see that he was being attacked by three women, one of whom had jumped on his back and entwined her arms around his neck, half-strangling him. My first instinct was to go to his aid, but instead I pulled Gomani down the steps, pushed him into the back seat of the car and shut the door. I ran round to the driving seat to tell Logan to get moving, only to find that he was not there.

I jumped into the seat with the intention of driving the car off myself, but the keys were missing.

Another African jumped into the back of the car with the old man and, as I had previously agreed that one of his retinue should be allowed to accompany him to Malamulo, I let him stay and slammed the door closed again. At that moment Logan, having beaten off some men who had attacked him, came up through the smoke with the keys, so I slid along the front seat to make room for him. He started up and we began to move down the track, but as we gathered speed Gomani opened the rear door again and tried to jump out. I caught him and pulled him back, and as I did so I saw Gorham throw himself at the door of the car and slam it shut with his body, the force of the impact bowling him over by the back wheels.

In spite of several attempts at rescue on the way, we soon reached the main road, where I told Logan to stop. A quick glance assured me that there was nobody on the road ahead, so I told him to drive non-stop to Ncheu. I watched them start, and then ran up the 300 yards to the house to see what was happening there. I never had aspirations as a middledistance runner, and, in addition, I was suffering from the effects of the tear smoke and the discomfort of wearing a gas mask, though I had long since removed it. I arrived back at the house, therefore, completely out of breath, to find that Chevallier, Llewelyn and Gorham were doing everything possible to restore the situation. Gomani's sons, his counsellors and most of the Africans had disappeared, but there were a few minor skirmishes going on in the surrounding bushes. Scott was nowhere to be seen.

My first act was to send off a truck with some men in it to follow up Logan and his prisoner and escort them to Ncheu, and, this done, I turned to lend a hand to Chevallier and Llewelyn.

Gorham reported that when he was lying winded on the ground after being knocked down by the car Willard Gomani had grabbed his revolver which had fallen out of its holster, wrenched it from its lanyard and run away with it.

Before I had time to recover my breath, a message came in over the radio from the escort truck reporting that Gomani had escaped. Quickly piling some men into another truck, I went off to see for myself what had happened.

Not half a mile from the end of the track where I had left it I found the car stopped by the side of the road, with the escort truck behind it. Logan told me that when he had reached that point Gomani had put his arm round his neck and forced his head back so that he could not see the road, and had therefore no alternative but to jam on the foot brake and stop the car. In the same instant a crowd of Africans had darted out from behind an Indian store at the side of the road, pulled Gomani out and run with him across the broken ground in the direction of the nearby Portuguese border.

There were no roads or tracks between us and the frontier, and we were by then all too exhausted from our exertions to be able to pursue them on foot with any hope of catching them, beside which they would have been able to dodge us with ease in the hills beyond. I therefore went back with my men to the Chief's house, there to face the melancholy task of composing a brief report on the day's happenings for the information of my Commissioner and the Governor. In it I stated that I proposed to establish temporary headquarters at Lizulo and to stay there until Gomani had been recaptured. This I despatched by car to Ncheu, where it was telephoned through to Zomba.

I was very sad at heart that this, my last operation in the Colonial Police Service, had been a failure, but I felt that we had been defeated by factors largely beyond our control. We could have used our firearms, of course, but I did not consider at the time (and I have had no reason to change this view since) that I should have been justified in the circumstances in taking such drastic action to achieve our objective; and, too, I felt that the people who would have been hurt would not have been the real instigators of the trouble.

For the European officers who were with me on this operation I had nothing but praise, for they had tackled their difficult task coolly and efficiently; it was certainly no fault of theirs that we had no trained and mature policeman to back them up. In fact, I felt that had we had a couple more European officers of their calibre with us we could probably have removed Gomani without African support; but, of course, an ounce of practice is worth a pound of theory, and it was certainly a most useful initiation in the more robust aspects of police duties for the African members of the Force who were present.

There is no doubt that we were up against a tough proposition in this job; for years the indigenous population had been governed by indirect rule—through the Native Authorities— and no effort

had been spared to build up the prestige and power of the chiefs until they had become little less than gods in African eyes. Of these, Philip Gomani was perhaps the most powerful in the country, ruling what was by tradition the warrior race—the tribe which had come up from Zululand generations earlier and had conquered the local population without difficulty. It was surely a bit much to expect our young recruits, with only a couple of months' police training behind them, to relish the idea of arresting one of their own leaders, whom they had been brought up almost to worship.

Two other factors which weighted the scales against us were firstly that, unlike the usual problems encountered when dealing with disorders, here we were faced with extracting one man only—their leader—from the heart of a large crowd, and, secondly, that the methods by which our efforts were defeated had been cleverly planned. The initial passive resistance, the obstruction by everybody in the house, one after the other in a set pattern, the blocking of the steps, the leaning on any officer who attempted to pass through the crowd, and, finally, the rescue at a certain place by a special party who could have taken no part in the incidents at the house, all pointed to a carefully prepared and rehearsed overall plan. It was certainly the most brilliant piece of organisation I encountered throughout my police service, far transcending in quality anything I had seen either in Palestine or Trinidad.

The contents of my report galvanised Zomba into action. More police were hastily gathered in from police stations and sent up as reinforcements, together with Peter Long and Luke Hannon, two senior and experienced officers; the Post Office was ordered to instal immediately a radio station in the chief's house on which I could maintain permanent contact with Zomba.

Meanwhile, the fullest possible enquiries were being made as to the whereabouts of Philip Gomani, Scott and Willard Gomani (whom we wanted for the theft of Gorham's revolver); two days after we learned that they were all in a prison in Portuguese East

Africa. The Portuguese offered to hand Scott over immediately, and I went to Lilongwe to accept delivery of him late one evening. In the interval a deportation order had been signed in his respect, so I took him back to Lizulo to wait there until 2 a.m., when he would start on his journey to the airport near Blantyre in the custody of Luke Hannon to catch the plane for England.

He was in poor shape, dirty and unshaven as a result of his incarceration in a Portuguese gaol, so immediately on arrival I invited him to have a wash and a shave, a suggestion which he accepted with apparent pleasure. After we had given him a good square meal, I asked him to hand over the film he had taken, as I believed it to contain important evidence in regard to the disturbances which had occurred there some days before. As a senior police officer I was empowered to sign a search warrant to secure such evidence, and this I prepared and handed to him. He still refused to produce the film, saying: “You will have to use force."” I told him to stand up and hold his hands up, which he did without demur. I took the camera from his jacket pocket, but when Peter Long opened it there was no film in it. I ran my hands over his clothing and felt a package in his trousers, but when I put my hand in his pocket it was not there. I therefore undid his trousers, dropped them down and found the film in a little bag attached to his underpants. I have had to do many strange things in the course of my police service, but never before had I had to take the pants off a parson.

This done, we sat about in the living-room, waiting for the time of his departure for ever from Nyasaland. Several times he made comments about the brutality of the police and how the poor Africans were oppressed by the white man, until I could control myself no longer. I said to him: “You should be down on your knees now praying God for forgiveness for what you have done to these people!” He looked startled and said no more while I was in the room. Later, when I went out for a moment, he turned to Frank Chevallier and Gorham and asked them one after the other: “Do you

agree with what he said? Is that your opinion also?" They both told him categorically that it was, and for the rest of the time he sat rapt in thought.

The fact was that the organised resistance we had encountered turned Philip Gomani from a temporarily suspended Chief into a permanently deposed one, and his son Willard into a convicted thief with no hope of ever succeeding his father in the chieftainship, as he might well otherwise have done.

Two days later the Portuguese handed Philip and Willard over to us, and they were taken straight to Zomba, whence the old man was eventually returned to the hospital while Willard went to the Central Prison to await trial.

I wish I could record that the Reverend Michael Scott was a better cameraman than he was a giver of advice to Africans, but when the film was developed it was found to be so out of focus and so under-exposed as to be valueless.

Federation, in spite of initial opposition, is now an established fact, and as a result new opportunities for advancement and progress have been created for the Africans in Nyasaland. I believe that time will show that they will have good reason to be thankful that they were not allowed in their misguided zeal to prevent this important stage in the development of their country.

Epilogue

FAREWELL TO POLICEWORK

And so my police career drew to a close. Our final week was a hectic round of farewell parties and parades, and we spent our last evening as guests of His Excellency the Governor and Lady Colby at dinner and afterwards at the opening performance of the Variety Show in the Zomba Gymkhana Club, at which the Police Theatre Orchestra made its first public appearance. It was an unusual role for me to be a passive spectator of the band's activities instead of being at work behind the scenes, and, needless to say, I spent most of the evening on the edge of my chair, on tenterhooks in case anything went wrong. Nothing did, so I need not have worried, and Mateyo and the orchestra had a great reception. It was a novel occasion for Nyasaland to see an African conducting a European choir, which included at least one head of a Government department, a Crown Counsel and several other very senior officials.

I thought I knew the programme backwards, from the many rehearsals I had attended, but one item came as a complete surprise to me. This was the unheralded appearance on the stage of the Police Concert Party to repeat in public a song for which Mateyo had composed both the words and music to mark the occasion of my retirement. This I had heard for the first time at a party given by the African police in the canteen the night before, and I had never expected to hear it sung again. Its title, appropriately enough so far as I was concerned, was "*Chisoni*", which in Chinyanja means

“great sorrow”. It is a popular platitude with a certain type of European to be found, unfortunately, throughout Africa that the African is incapable to feeling or showing gratitude. My own experience has led me to believe that the people who make this statement have usually done little or nothing for which the African could be expected to feel grateful; they are generally the same type of people who claim to “know the African”—a claim which always seemed to me utterly preposterous.

The warmth and magnitude of the expressions of sorrow which I received from the Africans certainly left me in no doubt as to its sincerity, and I can put it no more strongly than to say that I believe it equalled my own depth of feeling on the matter.

The next morning we set off bright and early on our long journey to Capetown, with our Vanguard estate car filled to overflowing with baggage and children, with additional suitcases and spare petrol on the luggage rack on the roof. As this was to be our last journey in Africa, we had decided to see all we could of it and had therefore chosen to motor the 3,000 miles and more to the Cape in preference to travelling by the more usual means of transport.

We had planned a circuitous route which took us first north to Lilongwe, on to Fort Jameson and Lusaka, and then down to Livingstone, where we spent several days assimilating the indescribable grandeur of the Victoria Falls. Through Southern Rhodesia we drove, crossing by the Beit Bridge over Kipling’s “great, grey, green, greasy” Limpopo River into the beautiful, unhappy land of South Africa and *apartheid*. Much has been written for and against this policy of racial discrimination and segregation, but very often (or so it seems to me) the simple facts have become lost in a morass of irrelevancy and recrimination. *Apartheid* is based on the premise that the worst white man is a superior being to the best black man. If you believe that to be true, then you must believe in *apartheid*. And it is not necessary, surely, to see for yourself the

depths of degradation into which the “poor whites”—the accepted term for them —have sunk in order to form an opinion on the subject. The tide is out at the moment, but it must certainly turn, and the South African Government will have no more success at holding it back than did their royal predecessor, King Canute.

And yet it must not be thought that the white communities of South Africa do not have a most serious problem to face if they are to survive at all, for any form of general franchise would result in an immediate African majority—even monopoly—in the Legislature. If, therefore, the tide cannot be held back, some means —some form of partnership of all the races —must be found which will enable the white population to swim with it, lest they be completely engulfed. This is the problem on which the best brains of the country should now be working; but time is short, and soon it will be too late.

We drove on into the 200-mile-long Kruger National Park, where we spent a week exploring the narrow, unsurfaced roads and watching every conceivable type of animal in its natural surroundings. The most dangerous, of course, were the elephants, and we had several narrow escapes from having the car crushed by them. We were careful, too, not to stop near any baboons, for they delight in getting on to the roof of a car and opening up the cases on the luggage rack, scattering the contents in all directions.

On through the Drakensburg Mountains, down the steep escarpment to Pietermaritzburg we went, and then via Durban and the famous Garden Route along the coast to Capetown, and our ship for home.

But our last link with Nyasaland was not yet severed, for, acting on a recommendation I had made immediately before my departure, the Governor agreed to send Mateyo home to England to undergo a two-and-a-half-year course as a student bandmaster at the Royal Military School of Music at Kneller Hall, Twickenham. With my two children I went to meet him at London Airport and

took him home with me. Many times during his stay in England I went to see him play at the magnificent open-air public concerts held at the School each Wednesday evening during the summer, and when I watched him conduct for the first time the great band of 240 musicians drawn from every regiment in the British Army, my heart nearly burst with pride. My pleasure was no less great when, within two years of his arrival, he became the first African to pass as a bandmaster the stiff examination for the Associateship of the Royal College of Music—a noble effort, indeed, for a young man who had lived most of his life in a mud hut and who had virtually no basic education behind him.

Inspector Mateyo, A.R.C.M., conducting the 240-strong band of the Royal Military School of Music, Kneller Hall, 1956

At his last concert before returning home in October, 1956, I watched him announce and conduct the first public performance of his own composition, a stirring march which he named "*Tsalani Bwino*"—"Farewell". And the trio, of course, was my own song, "*Chisoni*".

Now he is back in his own country, and, as Charles Apthorp put it in a letter to me, “completely unspoiled and still the charming fellow he always was”. The Nyasaland Police Band —of this I am certain—will rise to great heights indeed under his leadership.

And so my twenty-eight years’ police service, amateur and professional, has ended. If I were young again and seeking an interesting and varied career I would not choose otherwise. I have had many distasteful and unpleasant duties to perform, many setbacks, frustrations and serious problems to contend with, and many very heavy responsibilities to shoulder, often out of all proportion to my age and seniority; and, inevitably, there are many episodes in my life which, in the light of maturer judgment and experience, I would wish to have tackled differently.

In spite of all the difficulties, however, a career in the Colonial Police Service—or, rather, Her Majesty’s Overseas Police Service, as it is now named—still provides great opportunity for young men of integrity and enthusiasm.

For such as these, it is, I firmly believe, “Just the Job”.

About the author

Geoffrey J Morton joined the Palestine Police in 1930. During the course of his service in the Holy Land, he was awarded the British Empire Medal in 1936, the Colonial Police Medal for Gallantry in 1938 (the first ever awarded), and the King's Police Medal for Distinguished Service in 1942. He was mentioned in despatches in 1939.

In 1953, he gave up his career for family reasons.